THE BEST CHRISTMAS FARE  
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**“How sweet are Your Words unto my taste! Yes,  
sweeter than honey to my mouth!”  
Psalm 119:103.**

THIS is a time of feasting and we may as well have our feast as other people have theirs. Let us see whether there is not something for our spiritual palate, something to satisfy our spiritual appetite, that we may eat, and be content, and rejoice before the Lord. Do you not think that two of the words in our text are very strange? If you had written them, would you not have said, “How sweet are Your Words unto my ears”? The Psalmist says, “How sweet are Your Words unto my palate!” for that is the word in the margin. He did not write, “Yes, sweeter than honey to my hearing!” but, “sweeter than honey to my mouth!” Are words, then, things that we can taste and eat? No, not if they are the words of man—it would take many of our words to fill a hungry belly. “Be you warmed and filled.” It would take many tons of that sort of fodder to feed “a Brother or Sister destitute of daily food,” for man’s words are air and airy, light and frothy. They often deceive, they mock, they awaken hopes which are never realized. But God’s Words are full of substance—they are spirit, they are life, they are to be fed upon by the spiritually hungry!

Marvel not that I say this to you! It was God’s Word that made us—is it any wonder that His Word should sustain us? If His Word gives life, do you wonder that His Word should also give food for that life? Marvel not, for it is written—“Man shall not live by bread, alone, but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” God’s Words are meat, drink and food—and if bodies live not upon words—souls and spirits feed upon the Words of God, and so are satisfied and full of delight! This is the language of an eater as well as of a hearer—of one who heard the words and then ate the words. The expression is oriental, but we are not quite strangers to it, even in our western talk, for we say, “They seem to eat the man’s words,” that is, when the hearers are very attentive to them, when they enjoy them, when the preacher’s words seem to comfort them and to minister sustenance to their mind and to their spirit.

I like this way of describing the reception of God’s Word as a matter of eating, for a man cannot eat God’s Word without living! He that takes it into himself must live thereby. There is a reality about the faith which eats. There is a something there most sure which contains the elements of salvation, for tasting is a spiritual sense which implies nearness. You can hear at a great distance by means of the telephone, but, somehow, I do not think that anyone will invent an electrical taster. Nobody knows what may be done, but I fancy that I shall never be able to eat anything in New York. I think that we shall hardly ever reach such a triumph of science as that! There will always have to be a measure of nearness if we are to taste anything and so it is with God’s Word. If we hear it, it is music in the ears, but still it may seem to be at a distance from us. We may not get a grip and grasp of it—but if we taste it—that means that we really have it here within ourselves! Then has it come very near to us and we enter into fellowship with the God who gave it.

This idea of tasting God’s Word contains the thought of receptiveness. A man may hear a thing and, as we say, it goes in one ear and out the other, and so it often does, but that which a man gets into his mouth till he tastes it, and it is sweet to his palate, well, he has truly received that. If it is sweet to him, he will not do as they who have something lukewarm, which is objectionable, which they cast away out of their mouth. But when he finds it palatable, the sweetness will make him keep it where it is till he swallows it down into his inward parts. So I love this thought of tasting God’s Word because it implies nearness, an actual reception and a veritable holding-fast of that which is so appreciated by the taste.

Tasting is also a personal matter. “Friends, Romans, countrymen,” said Mark Anthony, in his oration over the body of Caesar, “lend me your ears!” And they go to be lent and numbers of people hear for others. But tasting, surely, is a personal business—there is no possibility of my eating for you! If you choose to starve yourself by a long fast of 50 days, so you must. If I were to sit down and industriously attempt to eat your portion of food, and my own, too, it would not help you in the least! You must eat for yourselves and there is no knowing the value of God’s Word till you eat it for yourself. You must personally believe it, personally trust to it, personally receive it into your innermost spirit, or else you cannot know anything about its power to bless and to sustain! I do pray, dear Friends, that we may, every one of us, tonight, understand what the Psalmist meant when he spoke of tasting God’s Words and of finding them sweeter than honey to his mouth.

I. First, tonight, I call your attention to AN EXCLAMATION. The text contains two notes of exclamation or admiration—“How sweet are Your Words unto my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” I cannot throw the notes of admiration and exclamation into my speech, as I would like to do, but this verse is evidently the utterance of one who is somewhat surprised and amazed, one who has a thought which he cannot adequately express. The thought is also one that gives much delight to the writer, for he exclaims, “How sweet are Your Words unto my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!”

Now, I believe that it is a matter of wonder to many to find the Gospel so sweet when the soul first tastes it. Until I believed in Christ, I could not have imagined that a man was capable of so much delight as I then experienced. When I first looked to Christ and was lightened, the ease I felt when my burden rolled from off my shoulders quite astonished me. It seemed to me as if a man could never know such rest as I then enjoyed! When I beheld my sin all put away through Christ’s atoning blood and knew myself to be “accepted in the Beloved,” I could have said, with the queen of Sheba, “Behold, the half was not told me.” I had heard my father and other Christian men say that blessed are the people who trust in the Lord, but I never thought there really was such blessedness as I found. I fancied that they would decoy me with some sweet declarations of what, after all, might be very commonplace, but I did not find it to be so. And I am here to bear my witness that when I believed God’s promise, I was so amazed and overpowered with joy that, even now, I cannot tell you the delight I felt, yes, and I, in the Word of a faithful God to all who trust in Jesus Christ, His Son!

This, then, may be the exclamation of a soul tasting the Gospel for the first time, but it may also be the exclamation of a soul cheered by still tasting the Gospel—“How sweet are Your Words unto my taste!” “I have known the Lord,” says one, “these 40 years.” Another says, “I have known Christ these 30 years, but He is as precious to me as ever He was, His Word is as fresh and novel as if I had never heard it, before, and His promise comes to my soul with as much of life and power as if He had only spoken it yesterday and I had never heard it till this moment.”

Are you not surprised, sometimes, you who are getting into middle life, or even verging on old age, to find how sweet God’s Word still is to you? And if, perhaps, you have been away from the House of God traveling in foreign lands, or you have been laid aside by sickness, or, if, perhaps, you are a preacher and do not often hear a sermon, is it not a very delightful thing to sit in your pew and, when you are hearing the Gospel, to say, “Oh, it is sweet! It is coming home to me now”? I heard a sermon some years ago—I do not often get the opportunity of hearing—and when my tears began to flow under a simple statement of the Gospel, I said to myself, “Yes, I am not a mere dealer in it, who hands it out to others, for I relish the flavor of it myself.” Why, I have had to stand here, sometimes, like the butchers at Christmas time, cutting and chopping off joints of meat for you all, and I have not had even a snack, myself, all the while! But when I get the opportunity of sitting down at the table and listening, it may be, to a poor, humble preacher talking about Christ, I seem to set my knife and fork to work and I say, “Yes, that is just the very food for me, give me some more of it! My soul can feed upon such fare as that.” And I have felt glad, with an inward and unspeakable delight, to find how sweet it was to my taste—“Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” Rejoice, dear Friends, if you find it so.

I reckon that this language of exclamation and admiration will also come from the most advanced saint, increasing in knowledge of the Gospel—the Believer who has studied the Word of God most earnestly and who has had the deepest experience in it. Other books are soon done with, but the Bible is never fully understood. I think that most readers will tell you that the more they read, the fewer books they treasure, whereas, to the young, there is a whole library to go through! The man who has been a diligent and careful reader all his life finds only some few books that he now cares to read. He knows the rest—he could write the most of them— perhaps could write them better than they are written! Now he keeps on striking out this one from the list and that other, for he has gone beyond them—and the book which charmed him when he was young ceases to have any value to him when he gets beyond it in his riper years. He has seen through its mistakes and now he yearns for something more accurate.

But it is never so with the Words of God. It is never so with the Word of God, the Incarnate Word, the Christ. The more you know of Him, the more you wish to know. And the more you taste of Him, the sweeter He becomes till in Heaven the sweetness will be far more intense than it is now—and Christ will be more precious and more delightful to us through the eternal ages than He is at this present moment! I believe that in Glory the saints will often lift up their hands and say, “How sweet are Your Words unto my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” When those words shall have been completely fulfilled, the very retrospect of the promise will charm our immortal spirits till Heaven shall become as a forest, like that of Jonathan, which dripped with honey—and every Word that God spoke to us, when we were here below, shall come back to us with matchless sweetness as we remember it in the world to come.

II. But now, secondly, take the text not only with its two notes of admiration, but as A STATEMENT, a cool statement of matters of fact. David is one who, when his heart boils with holy fervor, and his hand wields the pen of a ready writer, still writes accurately. He never speaks more than the Truth even when he is most emphatic, so that I am sure that David means to tell us, here, that God’s Words were truly sweet to him.

First, they were unutterably sweet. “How sweet!” But he does not tell us how sweet they were. He says, “How sweet are Your Words unto my taste!” as if he could not tell us what delightfulness he found in the teachings of God’s Word—it was unutterable! We can tell you, dear Hearers, that God’s Words of promise are very, very sweet, but we can convey to you no sort of idea of how great that sweetness is! Oh, taste for yourselves and see that the Lord is good! There is no describing the flavors of a royal banquet! There is no picturing to a man who has not the sense of smell, the fragrance of a delicious perfume. And you must personally know the sweetness of the Word of God, for to us it is positively unutterable!

This much, however, the Psalmist does utter. He tells us that God’s Words are surpassingly sweet, for he said, “They are sweeter than honey.” Honey is supposed to be the sweetest of all known substances. So David means that if there is anything that can delight the heart of man, God’s Word could charm his heart better than that! David means that if there is anything that could cheer a man, God’s Word could comfort him better than any other consolation. If there is joy, if there is peace, if there is rest, if there is bliss to be found in anything else—all that, and more than that—can be found in a higher degree in the teachings of God’s Word and in the blessings of the Covenant of Grace! Sweeter than sweetness, itself. Sweeter than the sweetest thing that God, Himself, has made, is God’s Word which He has spoken! Oh, that we did but know how to taste it!

The Psalmist also makes this statement, that all God’s Words are thus unutterably sweet to him. He does not say that they are so to all men, but he says, “How sweet are Your Words unto my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” He speaks thus of all God’s Words. We know some people who love God’s promises, but they do not care much about His Laws. If God speaks a Word of Grace, they like that. But if it is a word of command, they do not care about that. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, I hope we have a taste for every Word that God has spoken! A man ought not to say, “I do not like a sermon from the Old Testament as much as I do a sermon from the New Testament.” There must be no picking and choosing with God’s Word! It is virtually atheism when men begin to set one Word of God over against another, for the man who dares to criticize God’s Revelation makes himself greater than God—and therein he has undeified the Deity, and there is no God to him!

My God is such to me that if I know a Word to be Inspired by His Spirit, I value it beyond all conception! It is not for me to say, “This Word of my Master is nothing compared with another Word.” All these Words came from the same mouth and, coming from the same mouth, they are all equally true to me. And, if not all alike rich in comfort, yet “all Scripture is given by Inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” From one end of it to the other, it answers some Divine purpose—who am I that I should sit in judgment upon it? I pray you, Brothers and Sisters, value every Word of God, and let no man lend you into the error of setting this one above the other, for, if they are God’s Words, they are all precious—and you ought to count them so.

David seems to imply that God’s Words were precious to him at all times. They were sweet to him when he wrote the text—I cannot tell in what condition of body and mind he was at that time—but this I do know, lying upon the bed of sickness, racked with pain, many of God’s saints have said, “How sweet are Your Words to my taste!” And this I also know that, lifted up with gratitude for the blessings of Providence—health, wealth, friends—yet God’s saints have found greater sweetness in His Word than in all temporal things and they have still said, “How sweet are Your Words unto my taste!” This is an abiding mark of a child of God, that God’s Words are sweet to him, yes, sometimes very sweet even when he is half afraid to partake of them! “Oh,” he says “would God they were mine! I need nothing sweeter than God’s Word and, even if I am a little fearful of appropriating it to myself, yet still it is very, very dear to me.” If the name of Jesus is sweeter than honey to your taste, then be glad, for this is a mark of a child of God that never failed yet—and never will fail while the world stands!  
III. Now, thirdly, look at the text, again, and you will see that it contains A REPETITION—“How sweet are Your Words unto my taste!” Well, that is all right, David—we understand you. “Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” Why do you need to say that? Is not that saying the same thing twice? Yes, and intentionally so, because God’s Word is sweet to His people in many ways and many times over!

As I have already said to you, it is very sweet in its reception. When we first take it into our heart and feed upon it, it is very precious, but, spiritually, men are something like ruminating animals—they have the power of feeding again, and again, and again—on that which they have once received. Look how the cattle lie down and chew the cud. And it is when they chew the cud, I suppose, that they get the sweetness out of that which they have eaten. And so, spiritually, when men have once received Christ, they get increasing sweetness out of Him by meditation. Having taken Him into their souls, they afterwards inwardly digest the precious Word of God and get the secret juice and latent sweetnesses out of the promises of God’s most holy Revelation and out of Jesus Christ, Himself! It is thus that the Psalmist first says, “How sweet are Your Words unto my taste!” And then he rolls them around, again, in his mouth by meditation, and so he repeats himself as he says, “Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!”

But do you not think that the repetition in the text means something else, namely, that while, first of all, Christ’s Word is very sweet to our taste, there is another sweetness when we get it into our mouth—not so much for our own eating as speaking of it to others? There is great sweetness about the declaration of God’s Words! Some of you who love the Lord have never yet told anybody. You are

 secret Christians—you hide away behind pillar and post. Oh, but God’s Word is very sweet to you, you say, as you eat your morsel of bread in the corner! So it is, but you would have another and a greater sweetness if you would come out and avow that you love the Lord! I am sure you would. In fact, there is many a child of God who never enjoys the full sweetness of religion because he has not had the courage to confess Christ before men. I wish that some of you halting ones, you who are much afraid and fearing, would obey the whole of the Gospel. You know the Gospel—“He who believes and is baptized shall be saved.” “With the heart man believes unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

Now, obey the whole of the Gospel and then you shall get the whole of its sweetness. But, perhaps, there is some peculiar flavor in the Word which you have never known as yet because you have been disobedient children. Did you ever notice that saying of our Lord, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”? Yes, you know all about that, you say. Christ says to you, “Come unto Me and I will give you rest.” Now go a little farther—what is the next verse? “Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; and you shall find rest.” Why, that is another rest! I thought you had rest—did not Jesus say that He would give you rest? Yet in the next verse He says, “You shall find rest.” Yes, that is another rest, a still deeper one which you find when you willingly take Christ’s yoke upon you and become His disciples, learning of Him. So I believe my text means just that. God’s Word is very sweet to the taste when you receive it by faith, but it has another and a special and deeper sweetness when you bring it into your mouth and confess Christ before men.

And let me add to this that there is a very special sweetness about preaching Christ—in the public proclamation of His Word. It may be that some Brother, here, has the gift of speech, but has never used it for his Master. Let me put in my witness here. God’s Word has been unutterably sweet to my own heart, as I have believed it—it has been remarkably precious to me as I have confessed it as a Christian man—but still there is a something, I cannot tell you what, of singular delight about the preaching of this Word. Oh, sometimes, when I have prepared my sermon, it has been bitter in my belly, but it has been as honey in my mouth when I have preached it to the great congregation gathered here! If I might choose my destiny and if I had, even, to stay out of Heaven for the purpose, it would be Heaven to me to be permitted to always be preaching Christ and the glories of His salvation! And I do not know that I should have any choice between that and Heaven—if I might be privileged to be, without ceasing, lauding and praising and extolling that dear Word of God—the Christ who was born at Bethlehem. If I might proclaim to sinners everywhere that God is in him making reconciliation, no, that He has made reconciliation for all who believe in Him, this might be Heaven enough, at least for one poor heart, world without end.

“How sweet are Your Words unto my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” Try, Brother, whether it will not sweeten your mouth if you begin to preach Christ! Perhaps you have been too quiet and too silent. Get up and speak for Jesus and see whether the honey does not come into your mouth at once! In the olden times they pictured the orator with bees buzzing round his lips, storing up the honey that dropped from his sweet utterances. This may be but a fable concerning the human talker, but certainly it is true of the man who preaches Christ—that his lips drop honey, and the more he speaks of his dear Lord and Master, and the less he tries, with human eloquence, to magnify himself—the more of sacred sweetness shall there be in every word that he utters!

So I think I have accounted for the repetition, have I not? It is no repetition after all. At least it is no tautology—it is only a right and necessary repetition.

IV. And now I am going to wind up, in the fourth place, with AN EXAMINATION—the examination of everybody here present, tonight. It is the close of the year and one may not object to a few personal enquiries at such a time.

The first and chief enquiry is this—Are God’s Words sweet to me? Is Christ, Himself, the Master-Word of God, the Logos? Is He sweet to me? For, if not, what is the reason?

First, may it be that I have no taste? Have I spiritual taste? It would be a sad thing to be wholly without natural taste. I do know one such person, who has no taste at all. The poet Wordsworth was for years without the power of smell. His was a very remarkable case, with a mind so dainty, so delicate, so beautiful. Once upon a time, for a very short season, the power of smell came to him among the heather and you know how every primrose by the river’s brim had words for Wordsworth and talked with him—and when the sweet perfume came from the dear May flowers, the poet was quite enraptured, as if he had, for a little while, entered into Heaven! But the power of smell soon went away and he was, again, unhappily bereft of it. The richest flower, the sweetest shrub could be nothing to the man whose nostril was not sensitive to its perfume.

And what if that should be so with me spiritually? Perhaps, my dear Hearer, you have heard all we have been saying about Christ and you have heard many rich and rare hymns about Him. But you never felt that there was any sweetness in Him. Then I beg you to enquire whether you may not be lacking in a sense which others have. If a person were to say to me, “How lovely is that Italian sky! What a deep blue it has!” and if I turned my face that way and said, “I see nothing at all.” If, when he pointed to the sea, or to the green fields, I looked in that direction, and saw nothing, what should I infer? Why, that he possessed a power called sight, which I did not possess! Of course I might be foolish enough to say, “There is no blue sky. There is no such thing. There are no green fields. There is no ocean. There is no sun. I am sure there is not, for I never saw them.”

One day I saw a man sitting at a table with his napkin under his chin, enjoying his dinner, and he overheard an observation that I made about a sinner, and he said, “I never had a spiritual sensation in my life and I do not believe that there is anything spiritual in this world.” Now, if I had been standing near a sty and a pig had made that observation, I should not have contradicted him—and I did not contradict this man—for I thought that he spoke the truth! I believed that he had never experienced a spiritual sensation in his life! And when some men say, “I perceive no sweetness in Christ and, therefore, there is none,” I wish that they would draw another inference—“Therefore I have not that taste which would enable me to perceive His sweetness”—for that is the truth. A man who has never been born again is dead as to all spiritual things and he cannot hear, or see, or taste anything that is spiritual. He is not alive unto God as yet. I put this solemn enquiry to everyone who says, “I see no beauty in Christ”—may it not be that you have no eyes? If you say, “I hear no music in His voice. In fact, I do not hear that voice,” may it not be that your ears are sealed? And if you say, “I taste no sweetness in the Word of God, or the Christ of God,” may it not be that you are still dead in trespasses and sins? If so, may God quicken you in His infinite mercy!

Still, there is another answer to the question which I beg to put by way of examination. If the Word of God is not very sweet to me, have I an appetite? Solomon says, “The full soul loathes honeycomb, but to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.” Ah, when a soul is full of itself, of the world and of the pleasures of sin, I do not wonder that it sees no sweetness in Christ, for it has no appetite! Oh, but when a soul is emptied. When a soul hungers and thirsts after God. When it is conscious of its needs and miseries, as I hope some here present are, then is Christ sweet, indeed! O hungry ones, take Him into your souls, suck down His precious Word! Christ has come on purpose to feed hungry spirits. If you need Him, you may have Him—and the more you need Him, the more free He is to you—and the more freely may you partake of Him! He is just such a Christ as you need. May God make you ravenous after Him—so ravenous that you may never rest till you have received Him as altogether your own!

Yet there is another answer. If I do not taste sweetness in Christ, am I in health? When a man is ill, his soul “abhors all manner of meat.” Nothing tastes nice to a man whose palate is out of order through sickness. Now, does it happen, tonight, that some of you do not feel any joy in Christ? Then you are ill! Brothers and Sisters, put out your tongue, let us look at it. Ah, it has got furred up with the world, I am sure! Something ails you if Christ is not sweet. Sometimes you have sat in these pews, some of you, and you have heard Christ preached till you hardly knew how to keep your seats. You have been ready to stand up and clap your hands to the praise of His dear name—but now you do not feel anything at all. You can almost go to sleep, if you do not actually slumber. The preacher is quite willing to share the blame with you, for he is not all he ought to be. But he does not mean to take all the blame of it, for, as far as he knows how, he preaches the same Savior, now, as always, and tries to preach Him with as much earnestness as ever. May it not be possible, Brother or Sister, that you are not quite right spiritually, that you are getting ill, that your heart is growing feeble? Go home and pray the Lord to set you right. Oh, that He would cleanse you, purify you, make you yet to be strong and vigorous—and then this would be one of the first tokens of it—that Christ would once more become inexpressibly sweet to you!

I must also get you to ask yourself this question— Have I savored the world or sin? People sometimes lose their appetite for sweetness by eating something sour. You may have had one flavor in your mouth, but when you have eaten something with a different flavor, you cannot taste the first. If a man gets fond of the leeks, the garlic and the onions of Egypt— strong things, those—if he once gets the savor of them into his mouth, he is not likely to have any very dainty tooth for the precious things of God. Spiritual flavors have need of great spirituality to enjoy them, I know not what other word to use. They need that the palate be kept clean, for otherwise, if the world is sweet to us, if sin has any hold upon us—to that extent and degree shall we be incapable of appreciating the sweet things of God.

This is my last question— Have I habituated myself to this food? All earthly sweetness spoils—he who eats honey for a long while will care no more for honey. But it is very different with the Christ of God. The sweetness of Christ is not fully known except to those who have known Him long, who by reason of constant use have had their senses fully exercised. There is none so greedy after Christ as the man who has had most of Him. Paul had been a Believer at least 15 years and yet he said this was his ambition, “That I may know Him.” Had he not known Christ before? Yes, but the more he knew Him, the more he longed to know Him. Come, Brother, if you do not taste the sweetness of Christ, tonight, in the preaching of the Word of God, surely it must be because you have not of late been feeding upon Him. Make haste and come along—and let your soul be filled with Him, even from this glad hour.

I have done when I have reminded those here present who see no sweetness in the Words of God, that there is a time coming when they will be compelled to hear the Word of God in a very different way from that in which they hear it to-night. One of the first works of the Resurrection will be the creation of the ear. I do not know by what process we shall be raised from the dead, except that the Lord Jesus said this, “The hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” When the voice of the Son of God shall strike upon that ear of yours, what a sensation it will cause! God has spoken to you, now, by the voice of one like yourself, and He has spoken according to the printed page—and you have chosen not to hear it.

But when, in that Last Day, He shall speak by the angel’s trumpet and by the voice of His Son! You will be obliged to hear and, rising from your grave, bursting your cerements, you must obey and you must stand— willing or unwilling—before that last dread tribunal, to answer for every deed done in the body, for every idle word that you have spoken, yes, and for every thought that you have imagined against the Most High God! It may be a thousand years before that will happen, it may be ten thousand years, I cannot tell, but it will happen in God’s time—and that space between will be but as the twinkling of an eye—and there will you be before the face of the great Judge and you will not be able to say with David, “How sweet are Your Words unto my taste!” But, you will cry out, in the agony of your spirit, “Oh, the gall and wormwood!” Oh, the fire that shall burn into your very soul when God shall say, “Because I have called, and you refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded; but you have set at nothing all My counsel, and would none of My reproof: I, also, will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear comes.” “Depart from Me you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.”

God grant that you may not be told so to depart! And, that you may not, I pray you to now listen to the voice of God which bids you trust Jesus and live! I can only speak with these poor feeble lips and there is no power in anything that I can say—but God the Holy Spirit can speak with irresistible might to your hearts and constrain you to taste of Christ, tonight, by hearing the Word of God, in your very soul! I pray that He may do it, for His dear name’s sake! Amen and Amen

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**PSALM 119:89-112.**

Verse 89. Forever, O LORD, Your Word is settled in Heaven. Other things come and go, and change. Moons wax and wane, tides ebb and flow, everything earthly is changeable. But, “Your Word is settled—settled in Heaven,” with the eternal settlements. No truth of it can fail, no promise of it can be broken. What a joy this is to our hearts tonight! There is something sure, after all—“Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in Heaven.”

90. Your faithfulness is unto all generations: You have established the earth, and it abides. That is, God has spoken to Nature and that Word has established the earth, and made it to stand securely.

91. They continue this day according to Your ordinances: for all are Your servants. It was God’s Word that made the sun, and the moon, and the stars. And it is God’s Word that bids creation still exist. And that is the almighty Word upon which you and I are resting if we are truly trusting in the living God—

*“His very Word of Grace is strong  
As that which built the skies!  
The voice that rolls the stars along  
Speaks all the promises.”*

92. Unless Your Law had been my delights, I should then have perished in my affliction. Let us remember how God’s Word has kept some of us alive when we had nothing else to live upon. Hope would have quite failed and we should have been driven to despair if it had not been for the precious, priceless Word of God.

93. I will never forget Your precepts: for with them You have quickened me. Nothing sharpens the memory like having been quickened. If we have been at death’s door and the Word of God has brought us renewed life, we shall never forget it.

94-96. I am Yours, save me; for I have sought Your precepts. The wicked have waited for me to destroy me: but I will consider Your testimonies. I have seen an end of all perfection. No matter who it is that boasts of being perfect, “I have seen an end of all perfection.”

96. But your Commandment—There lies the perfection—  
96. Is exceedingly broad. Covering the whole life—covering the thoughts, the intents, the desires of the inner and secret nature.  
97, 98. O how I love Your Law! It is my meditation all the day. You, through Your Commandments, have made me wiser than my enemies for they are always with me. If we have God’s Law always with us, we shall be wiser than the most crafty of our enemies, for, after all, there is nothing that puzzles and baffles cunning men like simple honesty. Do that which is right and you will cut through the nets in which men would entangle you. They cannot trip you up if your feet are settled in God’s ways.  
99, 100. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for Your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients because I keep Your precepts. There is more wisdom in obeying God than in all the ethics of heathen philosophers. It matters not from where they take their precepts and maxims—there is no wisdom like yielding one’s heart to God.  
101-104. I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep Your Word. I have not departed from Your judgments: for You have taught me. How sweet are Your Words unto my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth! Through Your precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way. The man who cannot hate does not love. But he who loves that which is right is, by no means, indifferent to the wrong and to the false—he hates it and the more intensely he loves God, and loves right—the more intensely does he hate every false way. Especially does he hate it in himself. Oh, to be delivered altogether from every trace of falsehood!  
105. Your Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. It shows me the way. It cheers me in the way. It reveals to me the difficulties of the way.  
106, 107. I have sworn and I will perform it, that I will keep Your righteous judgments. I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O LORD, according unto Your Word. Are any of you afflicted tonight? I commend this prayer to your use. One would have expected that David would have prayed, “I am afflicted very much: comfort me, O Lord.” Or, “Relieve me, O Lord.” Instead of praying so, he cries, “Quicken me, O Lord,” and he did well. Let us imitate him, for if we get more spiritual light and life, we shall, by that means, get more comfort, and the trouble from which we are suffering will soon cease to vex our spirit.  
108-112. Accept, I beseech You, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD, and teach me Your judgments. My soul is continually in my hand: yet do I not forget Your Law. The wicked have laid a snare for me: yet I erred not from Your precepts. Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart. I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes always, even unto the end. Oh, that everyone of us might be able to make this declaration of the Psalmist our own! God grant it, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

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THE SWEETNESS OF GOD’S WORD  
NO. 3197

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MAY 12, 1910.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT UPTON CHAPEL, LAMBETH,  
ON TUESDAY AFTERNOON, MARCH 12, 1867.

**“How sweet are Your Words to my taste!  
Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!”  
Psalm 119:103.**

IT is delightful to find how exactly the experience of David, under the Jewish dispensation, tallies with the experience of the saints of God in these Gospel times. David lived in an age of miracles and many manifestations. He could have recourse to the Urim and the Thummim, and the priesthood. He could go up to Zion and listen to the holy songs of the great assembly. He could converse with the priesthood but still, the food of his soul was supplied to him from the written Word of God, just as it is with us. Now that we have no open visions and the Urim, and the Thummim and the priesthood are altogether departed, we still feed upon the Word! As that is the food of our souls, so it was the food of David’s soul. Martin Luther says, “I have covenanted with the Lord that I would neither ask Him for visions, nor for angels, nor for miracles, but I would be satisfied with His own Word, and if I might but lay hold upon Scripture by faith, that shall be enough for me.” Now it seems to be so with David here. The honey that gratifies his taste is not found in angels’ visits, or miraculous signs, or officiating priesthoods, or special Revelations, but in the words of God’s mouth and in the testimonies of Holy Writ. Let us, dear Brothers and Sisters, prize this Book of God! Be not ambitious, as some are, of seeking new Revelations, or enquire for the whispers of disembodied spirits, but be satisfied with this good household bread which God has prepared for His people! And while others may loathe and dislike it, let us be thankful for it and acknowledge with gratitude the bread which came down from Heaven, testifying to us, as it does, of the Lord Jesus, the Word of Life that lives and abides forever!

I. Notice, first, THE WORD APPRECIATED. This exclamation of David is a clear proof that he set the highest possible value upon the Word of God. The evidence is more valuable because the Scripture that David had was but a slender book compared with this volume which is now before us. I suppose he had little more than the five Books of Moses, and yet as he opened that Pentateuch, which was to him complete in itself, he said, “How sweet are Your Words to my taste!” If that first morsel so satisfied the Psalmist, surely this fuller and richer feast of heavenly dainties ought to be yet more gratifying to us! If, when God had but given him the first dish of the course, and that by no means the best, his soul was ravished with it—how should you and I rejoice with unspeakable joy, now that the King has brought on royal dainties and given us the Revelation of His dear Son! Think a minute. The Pentateuch is what we would call, nowadays, the historical part of Scripture—and haven’t you frequently heard persons say, “Oh, the sermon was historical, and the minister read a passage out of the historical part of the Word”? I have, with great pain, heard persons speak in a very depreciating manner of the histories of Holy Writ. Now, understand this—the part of the Word which David loved so much is mainly historical—and if the mere history of the Word was so sweet, what ought those holy Evangels and sacred Epistles to be which declare the mystery of that narrative—which are the honey whereof the Old Testament is but the comb—which are the treasures of which the Old Testament is but the casket? Surely we are to be condemned, indeed, who do not prize the Word now that we have it all!

That Word of God which David so much prized was mainly typical, shadowy, symbolical. I do not know that he understand it all. I do know that he understood some of it, for some of his Psalms are so evangelical that he must have perceived the great Sacrifice of God foreshadowed in the sacrifices described in the books of Numbers and Leviticus, or it would not have been possible that he would, in so marvelous a style, express his faith in the great offering of our Lord Jesus! I put it to some professors here, do you often read the types at all? If, now, your Bible was so circumscribed that all was taken from you but the Pentateuch, would you be able, to say, “Your Word is sweet to my taste?” Are not many of us so little educated in God’s Word that if we were confined to the reading of that part of it, we would be obliged to confess it was unprofitable to us? We could not give a good answer to Philip’s question, “Do you understand what you are reading?” Oh, shame on us that with so many more Books, and with the Holy Spirit so plenteously given to guide us into all the Truth of God, we should seem to value at least half of the Word of God even less than David did!

A great portion of the Pentateuch is taken up with precepts, and I may say of some of them that they are grievous. Those commandments which are binding upon us are not grievous. Some of the commands of Leviticus and Deuteronomy are so complex and so entrenched upon the whole domestic life of a man that they were a yoke of bondage, according to Peter, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear. Yet, that wondrous 20th Chapter of Exodus with its Ten Commandments, and all the long list of the precepts of the Ceremonial Law which you may, perhaps, account wearisome to read, David says were sweet to his taste, sweeter than honey to his mouth! What? Did he so love to hear His heavenly Father speak that it did not much matter to him what He said as long as He did but speak, for the music of His voice was gladdening in its every tone to him? Now that you and I know that all the bondage of the Ceremonial Law is gone, that nothing remains of it but blessing to our souls—and now that we are not under the Law, but under Grace—and have become inheritors of rich and precious and unspeakably great promises, how is it that we fall so far short and do not, I fear, love the Word of God to anything like the degree that David loved it?

David here speaks of all God’s Words, without making any distinction concerning some one of them. So long as it was God’s Word, it was sweet to him, whatever form it might take. Alas, this is not true of all professors. With an unwise partiality, they pronounce some of God’s Words very sweet, but other portions of God’s Truth are rather sour and unsavory to their palates. There are persons of a certain class who delight in the Doctrines of Grace. Therein they are to be commended, for which of us do not delight in them if we know our interest in them? The Covenant and the great Truths of God which grow out of the Covenant—these are unspeakably precious things and are rightly enough the subjects of joy to all Believers who understand them! Yet certain of these persons will be as angry as though you had touched them with a hot iron if you should bring a precept anywhere near them—and if you insist upon anything being the duty of a Believer, the very words seem to sting them like a whip—they cannot endure it! If you speak of the “holiness without which no man shall see the Lord,” and speak of it as a holiness which is worked in us by God the Holy Spirit and as a holiness of mind and thought and action—a personal holiness which is to be seen in the daily life—they are offended. They can say, “How sweet are Your doctrinal Words to my taste, but not Your precepts, Lord! Those I do not love. Those I call legal. If your servants minister them, I say they are gendering bondage and I go away from them, and leave them to Arminians, or duty-faith men or something of that kind—for I love half Your Word and only half of it.” Alas, there are not a few of that class to be found here and there. And there are some who go on the other side! They love God’s Word in the precepts of it, or the promises, but not the Doctrines. If a Doctrine is preached, they say it is dangerous—too high—it will elevate some of God’s servants to presumption! It will tempt them to think lightly of moral distinctions! It will lead them to walk carelessly because they know they are safe in Christ! Thus they, too, only love half of the Truth of God, and not the whole of it. But, my dear Brothers and Sisters, I hope you are of the same mind as David. If God shall give you a promise, you will taste it, like a wafer of honey, and feed on it. And if He shall give you a precept, you will not stop to look at it, and say, “Lord, I don’t like this as well as the promise,” but you will receive that and feed upon that also! And when the Lord shall be pleased afterwards to give you some revelation with regard to your inward experience, or to your fellowship with His dear Son, you welcome it with joy because you love any Truth and every Truth as long as you know it to be the Truth of God’s own Word!

It is a blessed sign of Grace in the heart when God’s Words are sweet to us as a whole—when we love the Truth of God, not cast into a system or a shape, but as we find it in God’s Word. I believe that no man who has yet lived has ever proposed a system of theology which comprises all the Truth of God’s Word. If such a system had been possible, the discovery of it would have been made for us by God, Himself—certainly it would if it had been desirable and useful for our profit and holiness. But it has not pleased God to give us a body of divinity—let us receive it as He has given it, each Truth in its own proportion—each Doctrine in harmony with its fellow—each precept carefully carried out into practice and each promise to be believed and, by-and-by, received. Let the Truth of God, and the whole Truth of God, be sweet to our taste! “How sweet are Your words!” There seems to be an emphasis on the pronoun, “How sweet are Your words!” O my God, if the Words are Yours, they are sweet to me! Had they come to me from the Prophet and I had perceived them to be merely the words of man, I might then have estimated them at their own weight, without reference to their authority. But when my Father speaks—when the Spirit lives and breathes in the Truth to which I listen—when Jesus Christ, Himself, draws near to me in the preaching of the Gospel—then it is that the Word becomes sweet to my taste! Beloved, let us not be satisfied with the truth unless we can also feel it to be God’s Truth! Let us ask the Lord to enable us, when we open this Book, to feel that we are not reading it as we read a common book—truths put there by some means, unimportant to us how—but let us recollect that we are reading the Truth of God put there by an Inspired pen! That we have there God’s Truth such as He would have us receive—such as He thought it worth His while to write and to preserve to all ages for our instruction.

The Psalmist is not content to say, “God’s Word is sweet, and sweeter than honey,” but, “How sweet are Your Words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” After all, the blessedness of the Word is a matter to be ascertained by personal experience. Let others choose this philosophy and that form of thought. Let then gad abroad after the beauties of poetry, or dote upon the charms of oratory—my palate shall be satisfied with Your Word, O God, and my soul shall find an excess of sweetness in the things which come from Your mouth into my mouth!

The Word of God, then, while in itself certainly most sweet, and all the sweeter when we recognize it as coming from God, will only be sweet to us in proportion as we are able to receive it and to feed upon it. Every man must in this case feed for himself. There can be no proxy here. I wonder not at those who think lightly of God’s Word, notwithstanding the rapturous admiration they have heard expressed by others, for unless they have tasted it, and felt and handled it, they still must be strangers to its unspeakable sweetness!

II. Now we shall notice, in the second place, THIS TASTE GRATIFIED. If we can join in the words of David here, how grateful we ought to be, for there was a time when we had no such taste for God’s Word! A few years ago, God’s Word was so far from being sweet to us that we thought it the driest book that was ever written. It is not so now. We were then dead in trespasses and sins—and what is honey in a dead man’s mouth? But we are alive unto God now by Jesus Christ, being quickened by the Spirit. Remember, my Brothers and Sisters, how Divine Grace has made

you to differ from the most of men. Many who see the dainties of God’s Word pass them by. Like those poor hungry children that we have seen standing outside a shop where the savory meat is just within the window—they can see it and smell it—but they cannot eat it. Many of our hearers have sense enough to perceive that there is something in the Bible that is very satisfying and nourishing. They see it with their eyes, but, like the unbelieving lord in the city of Samaria, they taste not of it themselves. Yes, and there are some who are so far gone—and we were like that once—that they have no wish to taste, for their palate has become so depraved that they feed upon ashes, a deceived heart turning them aside! Like the raven which has no longing for the clean feeding of the dove, they are content with the carrion of the world. Like the swine, they are satisfied with the husks and they pine not to be fed with the children’s bread. Such were some of us—utterly disregarding the Word, or seeing it to be a good thing, but not able to gain it, or else accounting it to be a mere deception, turning from it to the joys of earth as if they could satisfy the soul! Oh, blessed change, Divine renewal, which has passed upon us, that now the Word should be sweet!

I remember well the time when I had spiritual life and yet God’s Word was not sweet to me. When God first gives us a spiritual taste, He does not make His Word sweet, but rather, if I may so say, salt or bitter. The first taste of the true Word of God I ever got was like Jeremiah’s draught of wormwood. It seemed to break my teeth as with gravel stones. It was none other than this, “The soul that sins, it shall die.” Did you ever have that in your mouth and have to turn it over and over again as a bitter morsel that you could not swallow? And when at last it did seem to be swallowed, it was like wormwood in your soul and bitterness filled every part and portion of your being, for you felt yourself a sinner, all undone, lost and ruined! Oh, it was a blessed thing when standing at the foot of the Cross, and calling upon the name of the Lord, you could wash your mouth clear of those bitter aloes of repentance and conviction of sin with the cup of consolation—the cup of salvation! After that first bitter draught which purged the mouth so Divinely and made it ready to receive the sweetness of the Word, then it was that on one happy day, looking up and seeing the flowing of the precious blood, you perceived your mouth to be filled with honey, instead of vinegar, for you saw the vinegar transferred to Christ and the gall and the wormwood given to Him, while you drank of the “wines on the lees,” yes, “the wines on the lees, well refined.”

Since that day, our taste has been satisfied more and more, for it has been a growing taste. It has been educated. We can now discern between things that differ. On our conversion, almost everything was sweet. There was a good deal of false doctrine put into the cup, yet we swallowed it all, for to a hungry man, even a bitter thing is sweet! But now our palate has been disciplined to discern between things that differ. But all the education, if it is worth anything, comes to this—that God’s Word daily becomes more sweet and man’s word daily becomes more bitter to us. Our soul is taught more and more of Divine things and we see more and more of the preciousness of the Truth of God as it is in Jesus. Every Christian who has a spiritual taste will tell you that his taste is gratified with every Word of God because he sees something in the Word which glorifies God. My dear Brothers and Sisters, whenever you hear a sermon in which our God is spoken well of and His Glory is set before you, are you not happy? Do you not go from the place of worship and say, “Thank God I was there! God was in the midst of the temple. The Word of God was preached and my heart is satisfied”? And, on the other hand, whenever you hear a sermon in which man is magnified and the nobility of human nature is held up and God is put anywhere or nowhere, how do you feel about that? I am certain that you say, “That word which only glorifies such a poor fallen creature as man, my soul abhors.”

God’s Word honors His dear Son! I am sure I shall touch one string in your hearts when I say if the preacher shall discourse of Christ—if he shall ring the silver bell of the Savior’s precious name and lift up His Cross, and tell you all the power of His blood, the love of His heart, the shame of His death, the glory of His Resurrection, the prevalence of His plea before the Throne and the certainty of His ultimate victory over all His foes—your lips will seem as though you had some dainty on your palate and you will go home, and say—

*“The King Himself came near*

*To feast His saints today!”*  
How often, before you have left the place, have you been willing to sing with Watts—

*“My willing soul would stay*

*In such a frame as this!”*  
But suppose you listen to a sermon in which Jesus Christ is not glorified—doubts thrown upon His Deity—insinuations made about the power of His blood—the substitutionary Sacrifice twisted into a misty problem— whether an Atonement or not an Atonement, you could not tell—how do you feel then? Why, anything which touches Christ touches the apple of your eye! You say to the preacher, “Your oratory may be ever so fine, but I cannot eat at your table. You may lay silver knives and forks, and spread many a precious thing before me, but your meat is poison! I cannot feed if you do not glorify Christ.” O Lord, this is the reason why Your Word is so sweet to the palate of Your children—it glorifies Your dear Son and they delight to see Him honored among the sons of men!

God’s Word is sweet, too, when it proves the Presence and discovers the influence of the Holy Spirit. If you hear a sermon in which the Spirit is worshipped and glory is given to Him as one Person in the blessed Trinity, the Word is then sweet to your taste! It is a mark of the child of God that he reverences and esteems that Spirit by whom he is sanctified. If the preaching is never about the Spirit of God—if He is systematically ignored till we can almost say, “We knew not even whether there was a Holy Spirit”—I do not wonder that barrenness and leanness should come into the souls of those who frequent such a ministry! The Word of God is communicated by the Holy Spirit and by the same Spirit it must be ministered to us. Even after His Resurrection, it was through the Holy Spirit that Christ gave commandments unto His Apostles. As it was given, so it must be received, not in words, only, but in power and demonstration of the Spirit—and so shall it be sweet to your taste!

Moreover, God’s Word is always pure and holy. It is shocking if there is anything in the preaching that tends to make light of sin. Whenever I read a theological treatise, I can tell it is unsound if it trifles with the guilt of sin, the claims of justice, or the supremacy of the Divine Law. Under the pretence of magnifying Grace, some will dare to say that suchand-such a sin is not what it is thought to be, or not so heinous in God’s people as it would be in others! They speak of sin in God’s people as if it were only a spot, instead of a mortal disease. Oh, we have known some use expressions in the pulpit not only flippant and vulgar, but verging on the impure! That is enough to make the child of God feel like a sensitive plant when it is touched—he shrivels up. You never find anything like that in God’s Word! There are some things in our common version which do not suit the common ear, and should not be there, because they are not necessary to a faithful rendering of the original—but there is nothing that will ever touch the delicacy of the child of God. The pure in heart can say, “How sweet is Your Word to my taste, because there is nothing there that can shock my sanctified judgment or lead me to find fault with it because of its dealing triflingly with sin.”

The Word of God will always be sweet to the Christian because it so completely quickens him to every good thing when it comes in contact with him. I am sure, Brothers and Sisters, when you hear the Word of God faithfully preached, or read it with devout appreciation, you rise up like giants refreshed with new wine! What would we do if it were not for the quickening which this book sometimes gives us? I must confess that I sometimes seem to spring up as from a bed of sloth, quickened and filled with more energy than I ever had before when I have been touched with a single promise, or the power of a single precept! I have heard of the dead member of an animal—perhaps the dead foot of a frog—being touched with the galvanic wire of the battery, and as soon as the galvanism flows into it, the limb has been animated by the energy. Now, we do not receive a galvanic energy from the Word of God, but we get real life from it by which we, whose souls seem to be dead, suddenly start up with a Divine Power! To be lethargic in heavenly things must always be unpleasant to the Christian. That which makes a man serve God with the fullest liberty and the greatest excellence is being quickened with the Word of God—therefore the Word of God must be always sweet to his taste!

III. And now, thirdly, see here THE SWEETNESS EXTOLLED. David does not tell us how sweet God’s Words are. He gives us a note of exclamation, the word, “How!” and there he leaves it, as though he had tried to fathom the depth in vain and could only say, like the Apostle, “O, the depth!” “How sweet are Your Words to my taste!” He tried, however, to give us some gauge when he gave us a comparison—“Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth.” And that shall be the keynote which I will try to strike. Why is this Word of God to us sweeter than honey?  
Honey is reputed to be the sweetest of all earthly things, yet you will discover that the Word of God is sweeter than that. Let me speak experimentally. It is a happy thing to be successful in the work of God and to win souls. I think that is the sweetest of all earthly enjoyments. I have sometimes seen 20 or 30 persons in a day, most of whom have found peace under my own ministry. Well, that is sweet, isn’t it? But I am distinctly aware that the Word of God is sweeter, for when I have felt happy over my success, I have felt happier by far over some precious promise or some delightful Doctrine of Inspiration. I have thought I heard the Master say to me, when I had brought souls to Him, what He said to the disciples when they worked miracles, “Rejoice not in this; but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven.” The thought of my election, or of my redemption, or of the Glory of Christ, or of the faithfulness of God has been distinctly sweeter than the former sweetness which I had. There are things in the world that are very white. Some good housewives have made the linen look so delicately white that they have supposed that nothing could be whiter! And then there has come a fall of snow and, in contrast, the fairest and whitest damask has seemed dark! So, the joy of winning souls, the joy of domestic love, the joy of having served God has been like the damask of the housewife—but get a promise of God’s Word, and in comparison that will be like the snow which is whiter still! All the sweetness you can get from earthly joy will be exceeded by the sweetness of an applied promise from the Word of God. It is “sweeter than honey.”

The Word is sweeter than honey because it will sweeten every kind of bitter, and there are many sorts of bitter which honey will not take out of your mouth. You may feel the honey striving with the bitter, and the effect will be a singular combination of flavor more horrible than the bitter itself. It is never so with God’s Word. Let a man have his mouth full of bitter poverty, or the more bitter draught of scandal and contempt—ah, let his mouth be full of the last bitter draught of death—and if he gets the Words of God sent home to his soul, death, itself, shall be swallowed up in victory! In the pleasure he shall lose the smart! In the Divine Words of God to his spirit he shall scarcely know that there is such a thing as pain or grief, or even death, for all these things shall be gain to him when his faith gets full hold upon the oath and Covenant of the ever-living God!  
It is sweeter than honey, because God’s Truth never cloys. You cannot eat much honey. If you want to like it, only eat a little of it, for if you eat much, you will soon come to think, ‘What a weariness it is!” It cloys upon the palate. Not so God’s Word! You may suck as you will, but you shall never have too much out of the breast of Scriptures. Here you can come and drop your bucket every morning and night, but you shall never draw too much from this well, whose cool depths supply an ever-crystal stream! Oh, come to the banquet, you hungry ones, and never think to rise from that table, but sit there till your souls shall be taken away to a table yet more richly furnished! Feast on with appetites whose edges are always keen. It fell to this lot of one of our missionaries, in translating the Word of God into a very difficult language, to have to read one passage over a hundred times—a very laborious process, if anything would exhaust the sweetness of the Word—but he said that after the hundredth time, he began to understand it. He felt, then, as if he was just beginning to read it! This is a pasture where the grass grows the faster the more the sheep eat of it. This is a mine where the gold increases the deeper your researches become. You may keep on eating of the Word year after year, but still you will never get tired of it! I suppose the most of us would not like to have the same thing for dinner every day. And if we are confined to one form of diet, we get weary of it. There are some of you who knew the Lord when you were 11 or twelve, and some at 15 or twenty, and I perceive that years have passed over your heads till you have got to be 50 or sixty—but do you want a new Gospel now? Would you like to have another form of Doctrine, another system of theology, another Cross to trust to, or something in lieu of the Atonement by the precious blood? “Oh, no,” I think I hear you say, “the longer we live, the more we are fastened to the old faith! The deeper we study, the heavier our trials, the faster we cleave to Christ—

*“‘Should all the forms that men devise  
Assault my faith with treacherous art,  
I’d call them vanity and lies  
And bind the Gospel to my heart.’”*

And, verily, the Word of God puts the mouth in taste. Some things are sweet in the mouth if the mouth is sweet, but if the palate is out of taste, you cannot get the flavor of them. But the Word of God cleans the mouth for you and though a man of God may find himself as much out of sorts as he can be, if he needs to get his mouth in proper order for feasting on the Word of God, he need not go anywhere else but to the Word, itself! The idea of preparing ourselves for Christ is not a Gospel idea. The idea of preparing our minds for the Gospel by thinking about something else always seems to me unnatural. If your minds are inactive, go and read a good stirring part of God’s Word and that will prepare you for another part—for the Word will act first as a tonic to give an appetite and will afterwards be a food upon which that appetite can be satisfied!

Yet honey, with all its sweetness, may be forgotten. But the Word of God, if we once know its sweetness, will abide with us forever. Let your child eat honey to its heart’s content, yet the flavor of it will not be in his mouth in a week’s time. So, too, have some of us retained the flavor of the honey we got 15 years ago. “Ah,” says David, “I will remember You from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.” I do not know how many years that was, but some of us can remember times of communion and refreshing from the Presence of the Lord ten, fifteen, or, perhaps, 40 years ago! When Christ spread His flavor upon your soul, no sweetness was so sweet and you have the sense of it now! You like to talk of those seasons of delight, and you think—

*“Did Jesus once upon me shine?*

*Then Jesus is forever mine!”*  
Thus you get back the sweetness of the honey and the recollection of what you once knew of it.

I gather, from what I know of God’s Word, that all we know of it is very little. When we get to Heaven, I imagine it will be among our surprises to find what fools we are. When young men go to college, they think they know a great deal. And after the first year, they think they don’t know as much as they did. I recollect hearing my grandfather say that in the second year he was at college, he thought he was a fool. And in the third year he knew he was, and then the tutor thought he might get out. That is one of the things that we shall find out in Heaven—“Oh, what a fool I was! I thought I knew everything.” Those of us who preach to others will be of the same mind as Rutherford, who says that the poorest child who has once passed the veil and come into the immortal state, knows more of heavenly things than the most learned divine who has lived for 60 years to teach others the way of salvation. What we get in the wilderness is only just one bunch from Eshcol—we have not come into the valley where all the clusters grow. They have got us a little balm, and a little oil, and a few almonds from the land, but the land itself flows with milk and honey. “Since we have tasted of the grapes,” we sometimes long to go—

*“Where our dear Lord, the vineyard keeps,*

*And all the clusters grow.”*  
But it is amazing how little we know about it—how little sweetness we ever enjoy! And yet, little as it is, it is so sweet that it makes us hold up our hands and say with amazement, “How sweet are Your Words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!”

Hereby our growth in Grace may be ascertained. Is God’s Word very sweet to me this day? Is it like honey to my mouth? Very many of God’s children cannot say this. They can say it as a general rule, but not, perhaps, at the very moment of their present experience. It is a pretty sure sign of growth in spiritual life if God’s Word is more sweet to us than it used to be. The sweetness of some parts of God’s Word we can only know by being placed in circumstances where we shall understand the application of such-and-such a promise to our case. The man who never has any sickness, who has no losses in business—whose course is always one even stream—cannot, I am sure, understand some of the promises that are especially meant for the tried people of God. You cannot see the stars in the daytime, but I am told that if you went down a well, even in the daytime, you could see them from there. God often takes His people down the well of affliction and then they can see the stars of the promises. Some of the promises are written in invisible ink—and if you hold the parchment up to the fire of affliction, they will become visible—but till then, the page will be as if they were never written there at all. Now, take this promise, “When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon you.” Why, you who never went through fires and flames can never know the meaning of that promise! “I will never leave you, nor forsake you,” has often brought comfort to the tried and the persecuted. And the man that has been brought low in pecuniary matters, how often has he fed upon this promise, “Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure: his place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks.” If you were never slandered, you never drank wine out of this bottle, “No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against you in judgment you shall condemn.” I am sure, if you feel the sweetness of God’s Word, the secret of it is that you have experienced something or other of trial, outside or within, which has distinctly brought to your soul the sweetness which otherwise you could not have known.

That experience which does not make you prize God’s Word is good for nothing. A great deal of the experience of a Christian is not Christian experience. He experiences it as a sinner and an offender against God. But that which is Christian experience always has this for its result—that it leads to a deeper prizing of the Word of God and a higher estimate of the preciousness of it. If you now have a very keen sense of the sweetness of God’s Word, you have grown in confidence. Were anybody to say to me, “Honey is not sweet,” I could not be very clear about it. Perhaps I could not argue upon the subject. But supposing there were a dish of honey here, and I just took a spoonful of it, I would say, “You tell me that honey is not sweet? Why, my dear man, I have got some in my mouth.” I should scorn to argue upon it because I had the honey still in my mouth as an internal evidence and, therefore, argument would be too poor to be used in the case. I should laugh in his face when I had once got the sweetness of it on my palate. So it is with you. No infidel or skeptical remark can have any power over your mind if you are at the present moment in the conscious enjoyment of the comfort and sweetness of God’s Word! If you feel that it cheers you in the dark, what a fool he must be who says that it does not give you light! Why, the man can have no toleration from you if he says it does not strengthen when you feel the strength of it!

It is a sign that you have grown in spiritual health when the Word of God is sweet to you. I remember my father saying to us children at home, when we did not like our food, that he had been to the Union House and the boys and girls always liked their breakfast there because they were hungry, and, he said, “If you had to go without, it would do you good.” Sometimes, children of God get worldly and then they have no appetite for God’s Word. They say, “We do not profit under Mr. So-and-So.” The truth is, we do not profit under the Bible, itself, and should not profit under the Apostle Paul or under the Lord Jesus Christ, for we have spoiled our appetites! But when our appetite is healthy, we can come to the Scripture and not care much how it is carved. We would rather the preacher would carve it well, but some people must have it served up always in such dainty style—it must have little bits of poetry, like parsley to garnish the dish, and so on, and if a rough hand should bring them meat, they say, “No, we cannot feed in this style.” But if you have been in the field at work for God and have got an appetite, and the blood is circulating in your veins, then you can feast upon it till your soul rises up and says, “I thank You, Lord, for this, my food, and that You have made it sweet to my taste. I will tell my fellow Christians the delights that I have received in searching Your Word, that they may come and feed at the same table where I have been so daintily fed.”

May God the Holy Spirit make this the experience of every day to each one of us, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.  
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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #2415 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE BELIEVER’S HERITAGE OF JOY  
NO. 2415

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY, JUNE 2, 1895. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, MAY 22, 1887.

**“Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart.”  
Psalm 119:111.**

WHEN David wrote these words, he was not in a condition of ease and luxury. He was not in a position of assured safety, for he says in the 109th verse, “My soul is continually in my hand.” You know what we mean when we say that a man carries his life in his hand—that is to say, he expects death, he is in imminent peril—and may, at any moment, be cut off from his fellows. It was when David was in such a condition as that, hunted, as he tells us in another place, like a partridge upon the mountains, that he could say, “Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever.” He was rich in his poverty, he was enthroned in his exile, he was happy in his sorrow and they who have enjoyed a similar experience in their times of distress know how this can be!

I. With no further preface, I want to talk to you about our text under four heads, the first of which will be, LET US MAKE A MAP OF THIS ESTATE—“Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever.”

There was David’s heritage, that portion of goods that fell to him, that piece of goodly land that was his lot—“Your testimonies.” Ah, Brothers and Sisters, I cannot draw a complete map of this estate, it is so large, so wonderful, but, thank God, you can go and see it for yourselves! Walk over its broad acres, lie down in its green pastures, rest beside its still waters. It is, indeed, a wealthy country that is described in those two words, “Your testimonies.”

But what does the Psalmist mean by this declaration? He means, first, that he had a heritage of truth in the testimonies of God. A man’s mind is rich very much in proportion to the truth he knows. He who knows the Word of God is mentally rich—he has a large heritage. There are persons, I am told—deists—who believe in God, but who do not believe in the Word of God. They believe, then, in a god who has never spoken, a silent god, a god who has, at any rate, never spoken to his noblest creatures most capable of understanding his mind. To them, God is One who remains locked up forever in exclusiveness, except so far as His works may reveal Him. I think there are many difficulties in the way of receiving such a theory as that. Whatever difficulties there may be about God having spoken to us and given us testimonies—and that is the meaning of the word in our text—there are none so great to overcome as this one would be, that, through all these ages, so many men have sought after God and so many craving hearts have yearned to find God, yet He should have suffered six thousand years, at least, to pass, and should never have spoken to men a single word that they can understand!

Now, so far from accepting that theory, I believe this Word of God to be God’s testimony, God’s speech, God’s declaration about Himself and about many other things that His creatures need to know—God’s witness-bearing to us, out of the depth of His Divine Knowledge—that we may know and understand and see things aright. And I say, and I am sure that many of you will say with me, these speeches of God, these Revelations of God which I find in these two Books of the Old and the New Testaments are my heritage. I rejoice to accept them as the estate of my mind, the treasure of my thought, the mint of the heavenly realm, the mine from which I can explore fresh veins of thought as long as I live, claiming all as my heritage forever! I have been preaching the Word of God these 26 years in this one place to very much the same congregation all the while and if I had been obliged to preach from any other book, I would have worn it threadbare by this time! But the Bible is as fresh to me, today, as when first I began to speak from it as a boy, and preached to you from it as a youth. It is an inexhaustible heritage of mental wealth to the man who will accept it and give his mind to the study of it.

Look at the doctrines, the precepts, the promises, the prophecies, the histories, the experiences—it is no use for me to try to map out this estate, it is so large! As a great heritage of mental wealth, it makes every man who receives it, however illiterate he may be upon other subjects, a wealthy man spiritually, while they who discard it become povertystricken in mind, whatever else of mental attainments they may possess. That is the first meaning of our text, God’s testimonies are a heritage of truth to the man who receives them.

The next meaning is that God’s Covenant is our heritage. The word, “testimonies,” may be understood to mean, and it does mean, God’s Covenant. When the Lord Jehovah entered into Covenant with men, He made a testimony to them that He would do this and that—His testimony made the Covenant—and the Covenant was His testimony to men. Now, I can say, and many of you can say with me, I have taken God’s Covenant to be my heritage forever. And what a heritage that Covenant is, dear Friends! This is one of its clauses, “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.” This is another clause in the Covenant, “I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against Me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned and whereby they have transgressed against Me. And it shall be to Me a name of joy, a praise and an honor before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it.”

Again we read, “This is the Covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord, I will put My Laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.” “I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me.” “I have loved you with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn you.” “I will betroth you unto Me forever; yes, I will betroth you unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness and in mercies. I will even betroth you unto Me in faithfulness: and you shall know the Lord.” If I took the whole range of the Covenant, one entire night would not be sufficient time in which to explain it—I would need seven weeks full of seven sermons a day before I could even go round the fringe of the Covenant! Therefore, well might David say that within the compass of that Covenant he found a heritage which he had taken to himself to be his, forever—to be the rejoicing of his heart.

I have not, however, yet brought out all the meaning of our text, or shown you the full map of the estate that is here named, “your testimonies.” The greatest testimony of God in all the world is Jesus Christ. He is God’s testimony embodied. God said to us, “If you want to know what I am, look, there is My Son.” And Jesus came and said, “He that has seen the Son has seen the Father.” Jesus Christ is God’s testimony against sin, for Christ died through our sin. He is God’s testimony concerning Divine Love, for God so loved us that He gave His Son to die for us. In Christ you will find that the more you study Him, the more you will see what the invisible God is, for He is “the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.” Now, Beloved, I can say, and many of you can say, “We have taken the Lord Jesus Christ to be our heritage forever”—we are complete in Him, perfect in Christ Jesus—Christ is all and in all to us. When we once get Christ, we get everything! “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?”

Now, take the testimonies mentioned in our text to be God’s Word, God’s Covenant, God’s Son and there you have a map of your great estate, your goodly heritage. Oh, may the Lord, in His infinite mercy, make us to be so enchanted with this estate, so enraptured with this Divine property, that we shall never rest until we enter into full and final possession of it—and find it to be the rejoicing of our heart!

II. Secondly, I want you to proceed to TAKE POSSESSION OF THE ESTATE. What did David say? “Your testimonies have I taken.” He had taken possession of them and our next enquiry must be, how can we take possession of them?

I need not, this evening, repeat what I did this morning. You remember how I went to our friend, behind me, and offered him my hand and he took it? [Sermon #1964, Volume 33—Why Is Faith so Feeble?—

Read/download entire sermon at http://www.spurgeongems.org .] Now, this blessed

estate of Divine Grace is as free to any soul who is willing to have it as a shake of my hand was to my friend when he grasped it this morning! The Gospel of Grace is as free as the air you breathe—

*“None are excluded hence but those*

*Who do, themselves, exclude.”*  
If the door is ever shut, you have shut it yourselves! This blessed estate is for every man who is willing to take it. How, then, am I to take it? Well, first, by a deliberate choice. David said to the Lord, “Your testimonies have I taken by my own deliberate choice, I have elected to make them my life’s chief treasure.” I, too, can say, “Because God has chosen me, I have chosen Him. I have deliberately chosen His Book to be my guide, His Covenant to be my trust, His Son to be my Savior.” And I know that there are many of you, here, who can make that choice, tonight, because you have made it for many years. Would you change your Bible for anything written by man? Would you change the Covenant for any other compact? Would you change your Savior for any other? God forbid! We have taken God’s testimonies to be our heritage forever— willingly, by His Grace, choosing His Grace, being first chosen by Him and, therefore, choosing Him in return!

Next to our choice of God’s testimonies comes the act of faith which is a personal grip of them. After I had preached in this place one morning, there was a sinner convinced of sin and led to tremble before God. He saw his brother after the service and he asked him, “What must I do to be saved?” “Believe,” he said. “Well, Brother,” he said, “I always did believe! I always have believed the things that are preached and the things that are in the Bible. What more am I to do?” His brother answered, “Why, take them! Grasp them as your own.” “I never saw that before,” said the man, and so he was brought into the Light of God! Now, that is faith! Faith is the hand that grips the Savior and holds Him fast! There is a book. I believe it to be a hymnbook. I need a hymnbook in order to give out a hymn, so I take it up and use it for its own purpose. There is Christ. I believe Him to be a Savior and I need a Savior. I take Him as a Savior to save me—that is faith! Can you believe that Christ can save you and that He will? Then believe it! “I believe that He has saved my mother.” Yes, but that is not saving faith. “I believe that He can save my sister.” True, but that is not saving faith. Do you believe for yourself that He can save you? And will you stake your immortal existence upon His power to save you? Will you just rest on Him, sink or swim? If you will do that, you shall swim! He never sank who rested on the Lord Jesus Christ! Well, then, that is the way to take this inheritance, to take it by the grip of faith and say, “It is mine!”

“But suppose I were to take it,” says one, “and it should not be mine?” That never happened yet, and never will, for Jesus, Himself, said, “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” No man ever yet took Jesus Christ by mistake! If you will have Him, you have Him, and He will never say no to you. Take Him and He takes you at the same time. May God grant that you may understand that Truth of God and put it in to practice at once! Thus let us proceed to take this estate by deliberate choice and by appropriating faith.

After we have done that, the next thing is to take the full possession of this estate by holy diligence. He that believes in Christ has the Everlasting Covenant—he has God’s testimonies—they are all his, but he does not yet fully enjoy them. I know a friend who has an estate over which I am pretty sure he has never fully walked, for it is so large. He has climbed the highest hill, but he cannot possibly have seen half the property that belongs to him! There are many such estates that the owners have not fully seen and there is not a Christian, here, who has ever seen a tenth part of what belongs to him! In the exercise of this holy diligence, you and I have to take possession of the Word of God by studying it more earnestly, to take possession of the Covenant by believing it more fully and to take possession of Christ by communing with Him more closely and using Him more constantly, so that we may say with David, “Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever.”

Keep on taking, keep on taking, keep on taking! You know the story that is told about the hymn, “More to follow”—how Mr. Rowland Hill, having determined to give to some poor minister a hundred pounds, sent him £5 and wrote in the envelope, “More to follow.” To his surprise, at the end of a month, there came another one with, “More to follow,” and so it kept on, time after time, till the amount was all given. That is the pity of it—it was all given, some time or other. “More to follow” came to an end. But it is never so with God! With Him it is, “always more to follow.” From strength to strength, from joy to joy, from Grace to Grace, we still go on till we come to Heaven—and I suppose, that even there we shall still go on and on in everlasting progress scaling successive heights of bliss! We shall continue to become fuller of glory, or, if always full, yet we shall be made more capacious, that the fullness may be still greater. “Your testimonies have I taken.” Go on taking them, Brothers and Sisters, take them to be your heritage forever!

I wish that I could hope that everybody here had, by deliberate choice, by appropriating faith and by holy diligence, taken all the Covenant of God, all the Revelation of God and all the Christ of God to be his heritage forever!

III. Now, thirdly, LET US CONSIDER THE HOLDING. “Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever.”  
You see what kind of holding we have of this heritage. It is not leasehold, a shorter term every night we go to bed. It is not even a holding similar to that which is commonly used in Scotland, when the lease is for 999 years. No, it is a perpetual holding—“Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever.” Well, dear Friend, that is long enough, is it not? What else will you ever take on such a tenancy as that? That is a freehold! “Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever.”  
“Well,” says one, “I have a freehold.” Yes, but you will not be free to hold it forever. You may be a freeholder, my dear Sir, but you will have to go and your heir will step into your place! Somebody else will walk those acres and call your home his own—you have only a life-lease of it at the very outside. It is delightful to think that this inheritance of the Word of God, the Covenant of God, the Christ of God, we have forever because we shall live forever and we shall hold it forever! It is not dependent upon any one life—it is dependent upon three lives—and those three lives are the life of the Father, the life of the Son and the life of the Holy Spirit! And they are all eternal—and so shall the joy and the wealth of every Believer be! We have taken this inheritance forever.  
Sometimes we possess certain things which are ours, completely ours, but then they are not ours forever because they fade. But our inheritance will never fade or pass away. The crown that was won at the Greek games, though made of amaranth, would yet return to dust before long. There is nothing here on earth but is touched by the moon, and is ready to wane and to depart. There is nothing here that can be held forever, even if we could live here forever to hold it, for all things perish in the using. But this is a crown of life that fades not away, this is a heritage which, after a million years, shall be the same as it is now in fullness of joyful satisfaction! O you people who only think about what you are going to do tomorrow, or about what you will do during the next, well, say 50 years! You sometimes say, “It will be all the same a 100 years from now.” Yes, but suppose it is—what will it be a thousand years hence? Why, some, I hope, will have been in Heaven 950 years by that time! Oh, what joy we shall have known during that period! What breakings of the sea of bliss over our enraptured spirits!  
But suppose any of us shall have been in Hell all that time? Oh, ghastly thought! But what must it be to have been in Heaven a million years and then to feel that we are but at the beginning of our bliss? “I give unto My sheep eternal life.” “Because I live, you shall live, also.” The righteous shall go into life eternal! Oh, the splendor of eternity linked with bliss! I beseech you, dear Friends, rejoice if you have taken this heritage that you have taken it forever, for it is that which makes the joy of it!  
We have to reckon earthly things and say, “That is the value of the property; take it at 20 years’ purchase, or 25 years’ purchase.” But what must be the value of a blessing that is to last forever and ever? I have sometimes thought what it would be to have a toothache to all eternity. That would be bad enough, for it is the eternity that makes the sting of it. But what can we say of a joy that will last when yonder sun is turned into a coal and the moon is black as a sackcloth of hair, and this old world, wrinkled like a bottle in the smoke, shall be flung away as wornout and useless? You and I, then, in the everlasting youth of a God-given life, shall possess this heritage forever!  
Once more, notice that there is no way of taking this heritage except taking it forever. There is a way invented by some men of being temporary Christians. It is believed by some that you can take this heritage for three months, or that you can take it for a certain term of years, and then lay it down. They take it not at all who do not take it

 forever! He that enlists in the army of Christ must enlist forever—that is the shortest term on which Christ will take him. If you become a Christian, you must always be a Christian! I heard of a Brother, the other day, a teetotaler, who had been an abstainer, he said, “ten years, off and on.” Yes, you may well smile at that remark, but there are some people who want to be Christians of that kind, “off and on.” My dear Friends, the members of the Total Abstinence Society are ready to get up and say that they will not admit that man, and I say the same about a Christian man who is “off and on!” No, no! We go in for salvation forever! As David says, “Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever.” You cannot take them any other way. That conversion which is not radical and thorough is of no use. If a man converts you, another man can unconvert you! But if God converts you, I know that what God does shall be forever! He does not make temporary Christians, but real, lasting, everlasting Christians, as our Lord said to the woman of Samaria, “Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”  
Will you have this heritage for this term? Will you have it forever? Then take it and welcome! May God Himself, by His Divine Spirit, make you an heir of endless life through faith in Jesus Christ His Son!  
IV. But not to weary you, I shall close by inviting you, in the last place, to ENJOY, AT ONCE, THE POSSESSION. “Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart.” First, that was an evidence that David had taken God’s testimonies to be his possession, for they had made him glad. And, secondly, that was the reason why he took them to be his possession—because they made him glad.  
Now, first, this was a proof that they were his, because they made his heart rejoice. If your religion does not make you rejoice, it is not worth much. If you do not find a joy in it, you have not really taken it, you have not taken it forever, or, at least, though you may have taken such religion as you have, you have not taken the testimonies of God, the Covenant of Grace, the Christ of God, for if you had done so, you must rejoice! One said to me, the other day, speaking of the new style of ministers and the old style, “I used to notice, in the old preachers, that they seemed delighted with what they had to say—even if we did not enjoy it, they did. They seemed like men that set out a feast and, every now and then, they had a taste, themselves, they so enjoyed the Truths of God they were preaching. But,” he said, “the modern gentlemen—well, they know that it is a poverty-stricken country through which they are traveling. They are pretty well aware that there is no spiritual food for the people and so they do not even appear to enjoy the service, themselves, but they get through it in a sadly dignified way—an amazing way, indeed, showing their own talent and wisdom—but there is no hearty enjoyment of it.”  
And it is so! But when a man has taken God’s testimonies to be his everlasting heritage, when you hear him talk about it, his eyes begin to flash, his soul is all on fire, he is full of gladness over it! The genuine convert, too, who has found the Savior, did you ever know him to come see a Christian, and say to him, “Dear Friend, I think that I have believed in Jesus Christ. I think—I think that, perhaps, He has pardoned my sin”? Why, you say, that man is not up to the mark! As soon as ever a genuine convert comes to open his mouth, he says, “Oh, dear Sir, I hope that I have found the Savior! I do feel so happy, for I have laid my sins on Jesus, and He has appeared to me, and He has said, ‘I have blotted out all your transgressions.’ I am so happy that—if I talk too fast, pray do excuse me—but I have passed from death to life and I must tell somebody about the wondrous change! I can say with David, ‘Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever,’ I know I have done so, for they make my very heart glad! They warm my spirit! They are the rejoicing of my heart!”  
You notice David does not merely say, “they make my heart rejoice,” but he says, “they are the rejoicing of my heart.” He does not merely say, “they give me joy, but they are my joy, they are essentially and really the delight of my spirit.” Oh, what a difference it makes, when the man has truly taken Christ as his Savior, in the way in which he looks at his religion! Until you have taken the Covenant, the testimonies and the Christ of God to be your inheritance, you may be, after a fashion, deeply pious, and yet sadly miserable over your piety. Your religion may be as sweet to you as slavery was to a Negro, and not a whit more so. But when you have taken Christ to be yours—  
*“‘Tis love that makes your willing feet  
In swift obedience move.”*  
It is love that makes you joyful in God and, being joyful in God, nothing is too hard or too heavy for you, and you say, with Paul, “I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.” Our feet are made like hinds’ feet to leap over difficulties when we have really taken a firm grip of the eternal Truths of God and have taken them to be our heritage forever. It is one of the evidences of Grace when these things are the rejoicing of our heart.  
Then, lastly, another way of looking at this Truth of God is this—we take these things to be our heritage because they are the joy of our heart. Dear Friends I would like to refresh the memories of some of you Christian people by recalling your past experience. When you have been very ill, what has your religion been to you, then? I know that you can say, “I almost wish to be ill, again, to enjoy the rest, and the peace, and the delight that I had then!” When my dear Brother, William Olney, behind me, was undergoing most painful operations, I went to see him and I never saw him more happy than he was, then! I do not believe he was happier when he was going to be married than he was when he was awaiting the coming of the surgeon. He was so resting in God, so rejoicing in Christ, that he could not be more delighted than he was! His Master’s Presence made him full of gladness!  
Others of us know what it is to lie on the verge of death by the week together—and in the stillness of the night to contemplate very closely our approaching end—and to do so as deliberately as if we expected to rise the next morning to transact our business, regarding the eternal state, with hope and desire rather than with fear! We are glad to find that when heart and flesh failed, then there burnt within us another light that no man has ever kindled, another joy than corn and wine and oil can ever give to him who has the largest store of them! O dear Friends, I bear my own personal testimony that there is no joy like that of believing the testimonies of God, accepting the Covenant of Grace and living upon the Christ of God!  
I have often said from this pulpit, and I say it again, that if I had to die like a dog, I would wish to be a Christian even for the blessings of this life! But then, of course, it is the life to come that makes the joy of this present life, for if that were blotted out, we might be, of all men, most miserable, for we have more than enough of trial and of sadness if it were not for the thought of the world to come! But that life beyond, that hope that enters within the veil, that vision of Christ’s face, that prospect of being forever with the Lord—I would part with all the joys of sense to behold His face but for a moment! What must it be to be in His Presence— in fullness of joy, forever and ever? The expectation of that which is soon to be revealed makes us exceedingly glad.  
“Why!” one says, “I thought that Christian people were all miserable people?’ It is because you do not know them! And there is another thing you do not know, some of you, that is, how Christians can rejoice. You see, that elder brother, who was such a very proper sort of gentleman, was angry at the rejoicing over the prodigal’s return and, “he would not go in.” I do not know whether he did go in, after all, but if he did not, he could not tell how merry his father was, he could not tell how merry the servants were, he could not tell how happy was his younger brother who had been lost and now was found! He was angry and would not go in, so he could not know what joy there was in the home. But if he could have gone in with his cruel, cold-blooded temperament and could have looked on—and if he could have caught sight of his brother who had been so lately with the hogs, but who was now washed and cleansed, feasting on that fatted calf—I think his heart would have begun to melt, as Joseph’s did when he saw Benjamin. Then, if he had seen the joy of the servants and heard the music, and watched the dancing, I think he would have been ready to take a turn with them!  
If he had fixed his eyes on his father and had seen the greatness of his father’s love, and the joy beaming in his father’s face, I think that he would have rushed up to him and fallen on his father’s neck, and kissed him, and said, “Now I know what a blessed thing it must be to dwell in your love.” Oh, if you knew the joy of saved sinners, and the joys of those who have prayed and labored for their salvation. If you knew anything of the joy of the happy God, you would understand that a truly Christian life cannot be an unhappy one! God bring you, everyone, to trust in Jesus, His dear Son! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**PSALM 119:73-88.**

In this Psalm we have, as it were, notes from David’s diary. Verse 73. Your hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding that I may learn Your Commandments. This is a very instructive prayer. The Psalmist does as good as say, “Lord, You have made me once—make me over again. You have made my body—mold my spirit, form my character, give me understanding.” If God should make us, and then leave us without understanding, what imperfect creations we would be! A man devoid of understanding is only a blood and bone creation and, therefore, the Psalmist does well to pray, “Your hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding.” But what sort of an understanding is desired? That I may learn to discuss and dispute? No, “that I may learn Your Commandments,” for holiness is the best of wisdom and the surest proof of a right understanding is obedience to God’s Commandments.

74. They that fear You will be glad when they see me; because I have hoped in Your Word. A hopeful godly man is a continual source of joy to other people. When a man can inspire hope in his fellows—and he cannot do that unless he is full of hope, himself—he lights a fire of comfort. Bring such a man into a storm and he helps you to be brave. “They that fear You will be glad when they see me; because I have hoped in Your Word.”

75. I know, O LORD, that Your judgments are right and that You in faithfulness have afflicted me. We are glad to listen to a man who can tell us that—an old man, a tried man who can say that God has been faithful in afflicting him—a man who, after having borne the brunt of tribulation, can yet bless God for it. Such testimonies as these are full of joy and gladness to the young folk—they can encounter trial with a joyous heart when they hear what their fathers tell of the goodness of God to them in their troubles!

76. Let, I pray You, Your merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to Your Word unto Your servant. “Lord,” he seems to say, “I have been a comfort to others—be You a comfort to me. You have made others glad to see me, make me glad with the recollection of all my experience of Your mercy. ‘Let, I pray You, Your merciful kindness be for my comfort.’” If you have lost your own comfort, dear Friends, see where you are to look for it—to the merciful kindness of God! Those are two beautiful words, are they not? “Merciful”—take that to pieces and it is mercy-full. Is not God full of mercy? Take the next word to pieces—“kindness.” That means, “kinned-ness”—that kind of feeling that we have to our own kin when they are very dear to us. “Lord, let Your mercy-full kinned-ness be for my comfort, according to Your Word unto Your servant.”

77. Let Your tender mercies come unto me, that I may live. “I am so broken down, my bones are so full of pain, that if You handle me roughly, I shall die. ‘Let Your tender mercies come unto me.’ I am like a poor flower whose stalk is almost broken through, ready to droop and die. Let Your tender mercies bind me up, that I may live.”

77. For Your Law is my delight. God will not let a man die who delights in His Law! You are the sort of man who shall live. If you love the Law of God, the Word of God, the will of God, the way of God, He will not let you die! There are none too many of your sort in the world, so the Lord will keep you alive so long as you can serve Him here.

78. Let the proud be ashamed; for they dealt perversely with me without a cause: but I will meditate in Your precepts. That is a delightful turning of the subject—“They dealt perversely with me, without a cause”—but David does not say, “I will envy the proud,” or, “I will be spiteful to them,” or, “I will fret myself because of them.” No, he seems to say, “They may do what they will, but I will meditate in Your precepts.” When anyone has treated you contemptuously, or dealt perversely with you without a cause, instead of resenting it, get to your Bible! Meditate in God’s precepts! It is the noblest and, at the same time, the most successful way of fighting against contempt, so to despise the despising of men as to rejoice in your thoughts of God and His Truth!

79. Let those that fear You turn unto me, and those that have known Your testimonies. “Lord, make me such a man that they who fear You may seek my acquaintance. Of Your great mercy grant that if any of them have turned away from me through hearing slanderous reports about me, they may be inclined, now, to come back to me, for I love them, and I would not willingly offend them. ‘Let those that fear You turn unto me.’”

80. Let my heart be sound in Your statutes; that I am not ashamed. When the heart is right with God, there will be no need to be ashamed. Though you may make some mistakes and blunders, because you are human, yet, if you are sincere, shame shall not overtake you. What a blessing it is to have a sound heart! But when the heart is spiritually unsound, the profession is always in danger. The other day a friend of ours was taken from us almost in an instant through heart disease—and when Judas sells his Master, or when Demas turns aside to the silver mines of earth, it is the result of heart disease. There are many who go about in the Christian Church with a ruddy face and apparently with great strength of religion—but all of a sudden they prove apostates. Yes, that is the effect of heart disease! Therefore, pray very earnestly with the Psalmist, “Let my heart be sound in Your statutes; that I be not ashamed.”

81. My soul faints for Your salvation: but I hope in Your Word. What? Faint and hoping, too? Yes, a Christian is a wonder and a contradiction to many, but most of all to himself! He cannot understand himself. He faints and yet he hopes. Two apparently opposite emotions may be at the same time in the Christian bosom! Every man is two men, if he is a man in Christ Jesus. I sometimes think that there is a triplet of characters in every man of God, so that he has three different experiences at the same time. Certainly he can have two, for here we have them—“My soul faints for Your salvation: but I hope in Your Word.”

82. My eyes fail for Your Word, saying, When will You comfort me? “I look for it till my eyes ache! I strain my eyes to see Your Word, watching for it till my vision grows dull in waiting! ‘My eyes fail for Your Word, saying.”’ Oh, then, his eyes could speak! Yes, eyes can say a great many things! And blessed are the eyes that have learned to say this—“When will You comfort me?” It is a good way of praying, sometimes, to say nothing at all, but to sit still and look up. The eyes can say what lips and tongue cannot, so learn well the language of the eyes and talk to God with them, even as He talks to you with His eyes. “I will guide you,” He says, “with My eye.” Be you, therefore, able to speak to God with your eyes, as David was when he wrote, “My eyes fail for Your Word, saying, When will you comfort me?”

83. For I am become like a bottle in the smoke. An old dried-up skin bottle that is hung in the smoke of the tent over the fire till it is wrinkled and cracked—and almost good for nothing.

83. Yet do I not forget Your statutes. “Beauty is gone, strength is gone, comeliness is gone, but not my memory of Your Word, O Lord.” What a mercy it is that when the worst comes to the worst with us, still the best remains—“I am become like a bottle in the smoke; yet do I not forget Your statutes.”

84. How many are the days of Your servant? When will You execute judgment on them that persecute me? “Lord, I have but a short life; let me not have a long affliction.” Does he mean, “Lord, I have lived too long in this miserable state; I wish my days were shortened”? We must not murmur at the length of our days, but we may plead that persecution may come to an end. We may even go so far as to say with David, “How many are the days of Your servant? When will You execute judgment on them that persecute me?”

85. The proud have dug pits for me which are not after Your Law. It is not often that proud men take to digging, but here, you see, these children of the Pit learn to dig pits for God’s people—and they still have not given up the practice! Pits were dug in olden times to catch wild beasts, but now, often, the wicked dig pits to try to catch good men, seeking, if they can, to make a fault where there is none, or to lead us into a line of conduct which they shall be able to represent unfavorably—“The proud have dug pits for me, which are not after Your Law.”

86. All Your Commandments are faithful: they persecute me wrongfully; help You me. What a prayer that is! Store it up for use, dear Friend! Carry it home with you. That is the kind of prayer to be prayed on the roadside, in a railway carriage, yes, even in an accident—“Help You me.” “Help You me,” is a wonderful prayer! It seems to turn on a swivel whichever way you wish—you may use it to ask for anything you need in every time of emergency—“Help You me.”

87. They had almost consumed me upon earth. “They had almost eaten me up; they had almost burned my life out. Blessed be God, they could not consume me anywhere except upon earth! My immortal part would escape the burning of their coals of juniper! They had almost consumed me, but almost is not altogether.” When God delivers His people from the lion and the bear, the jaws of the wild beasts may be almost closed, yet they shall be opened wide enough for us to escape! “They had almost consumed me upon earth.”

87. But I forsook not Your precepts. You cleave to the right and God will not turn away from you, nor will He let you turn away from His precepts.

88. Quicken me after Your lovingkindness. That is a blessed prayer for us to offer. If any of you feel dull and drowsy. If any of you are heavy and slow in your movements, cry to the Lord, “Quicken me after Your lovingkindness.”

88. So shall I keep the testimony of Your mouth. Spiritual life is the root of holiness—“Quicken me after Your lovingkindness; so shall I keep the testimony of Your mouth.” May God bless this reading to our instruction! Amen.

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MY HOURLY PRAYER  
NO. 1657

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 26, 1882, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Hold You me up, and I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto Your statutes continually.”  
Psalm 119:117.**

“HOLD You me up.” This is no novelty as a prayer. We have met with it many a time. Another form of it lies hard by. Look at the verse immediately before the text and see it, there, in another shape. “Uphold me.” I know of no difference in the two prayers, “Uphold me” and, “Hold me up.” They are two notes from the same bell and they teach us that the Psalmist’s mind was full of the petition, for he was conscious of his need of this upholding—this holding up. We use not vain repetitions as the heathen do and, therefore, when we have to express the same idea, it is natural to the living child of God to couch it in as fresh words as he can—and though it is the same note, yet he changes it, somewhat, and first cries, “Uphold me”—and then, “Hold me up.”

Of course I am now preaching only from the English text when I note these changes of expression, and I am rather giving illustrations than teaching by authority. Yet this is of authority—that we have need, continually, to cry for upholding Grace. You notice that in the first prayer, “Uphold me,” it is for very life that he entreats for this upholding. “Uphold me according unto Your Word, that I may live: and let me not be ashamed of my hope.” He feels that unless fresh Grace shall flow into his soul, his spiritual life must utterly fail. Do not forget this—let it give weight to your pleading. But in the second of the two verses—the one which makes our text—he looks for more than life as the result of upholding. He looks for safety, a life of unsullied holiness and consequent restfulness and security. “Hold You me up, and I shall be safe, and I will have respect unto Your statutes continually.”

Both verses show you the importance of the prayer and both together, will, I hope, enlist your earnest attention to what I may have to say upon it. It is a very sweet remark that every prayer is an inverted promise. That is to say, God promises us such a blessing and, therefore, we pray for it. Or, if you please, if God teaches us to pray for any good thing, we may gather, by implication, the assurance that He means to give it! If you feel in your heart a God-inspired desire to ask a certain favor, it is because God intends to bestow it upon you! A prayer is the shadow of a coming blessing. Therefore we pray because the blessing is coming!

It is said that prayer cannot alter the purpose of God. Of course it cannot! It does not alter it, but indicates it, and since people are moved to pray this way or that way by the Spirit of God, it is because the Spirit knows the mind of God and His movement to pray is a Revelation of the mind of God to the praying one! Believing supplication is God writing His desires upon the hearts of His own children with the intent to fulfill them. Is it not written, Delight yourself, also, in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart? It is not that God will give the desires of His heart to every man. No—but to that man whose heart is in such sympathy with God that he delights in God and, consequently, desires what God desires! Then, when our heart runs side by side with the mind of God, our prayer is parallel with His purpose and, consequently, it is done unto us according to our desire.

Now, I conceive that it is always according to God’s mind to hold His servants up. He delights not in their slips or falls—to suppose such a thing were blasphemous! “The steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord.” God is pleased with the steadfastness of His chosen. He smiles upon the firmness of their standing. God would not have one of His people even dash his foot against a stone and, therefore, He sets the angels to guard them. If they do trip in their walk, He is quick to restore them, for He cannot endure that they should lie in the mire. His joy is that we walk with Him in constant holiness and He is ready to grant us this gift.

This prayer shows in David a great sense of the need of being upheld— a strong conviction that God could uphold Him—and an expectation and hope that He would surely do so in answer to his prayer. May we appropriate this prayer with somewhat of David’s feeling—deeply conscious of utter helplessness, fully believing that the Omnipotent Grace of God can meet that helplessness—and confident that He will hear our cry and answer us and uphold us to the end. Let us believe that our heavenly Father will keep us from falling, but let us be well assured that apart from His keeping, our soul will fall—and great will be the fall!

First, I shall speak of God’s holding us up and then of the two blessings that come out of it, namely, safety and watchfulness. “I shall be safe,” and, “I shall have respect unto Your statutes continually.”

I. First, then, UPHOLDING—God’s holding us up. It implies a danger and that danger takes many forms. The true description of a believing man’s life is that he walks in his uprightness. The figure is not hard to understand. “God made man upright, though he has sought out many inventions.” The very form and figure of man’s body teach us that we are not made to go on “all fours,” gazing at the earth from where we sprang, but erect upon our feet, looking upward to the Heaven towards which we tend by God’s rich Grace.

You know what is meant by an upright man, a man who does not lean this way or that, and who is not biased or inclined to that which is wrong. The upright column is the only one which can stand alone and he who is upright is independent, taking his stand, maintaining his place without a buttress to keep him in it. A very pillar of the earth is such a man. He may say, like David, “The earth is dissolved: I bear up the pillars thereof.” So have I seen amid vast masses of surrounding ruin a goodly pillar lift its capital aloft as if it laughed at destruction. There is something bright and cheering about the thought of the Believer being an upright man—but the danger is that he may not continue upright.

Columns, slowly undermined, lean to this side or that, and their fall is near. Unseen earthworms sink the hidden bases of pillars and cast them down. And secret vices have thus brought down many a noble character. A Christian man is a pilgrim and he makes progress in his march to Glory so long as he walks uprightly. But will he keep his uprightness? No! He is certain not to keep upright unless he is upheld, for the way is slippery. Ah, how slippery do some find it! It is as a hill of ice and at some points it is more treacherous than usual. Those who have ever gone over the Grimsel Pass will remember that on one side of it, in descending, there is a place they call, “Hell Place,” because the road is narrow and shelving—and the precipice on that side is exceedingly deep—while the path is singularly smooth.

Rain water drips and sometimes flows considerably over the red rock and keeps it polished as the floor of a royal salon—and though they chip out grips across the road that there may be a foothold, yet most travelers find it best to leave their mules and tread with timid footsteps over the slippery way. I have a lively recollection of that marble floor! I think they called it porphyry, but it had no charms for me. Most of us have had a, “Hell Place” in our journey to Heaven. You remember Joseph’s slippery way and how God upheld him, otherwise he had fallen, never to rise. David had the same and his fall was grievous. I say that there is scarcely a man who has not had some glassy bit of road where, at the best, his feet had almost gone; his steps had well-nigh slipped and he had been down on his face if almighty Grace had not interposed.

Nor is the best part of the road without its dangers. Believe me, no foot of the way is safe to the careless. I have noticed that more men sin without temptation than with it and that the heaviest falls occur upon perfectly level road where there does not seem to be a stone to catch the foot. Oh, take heed! Take heed! For there is not one point in the journey—from the setting out at the wicket gate even till you reach the river’s brink— which has not dangers in it! The prayer is always in season, “Hold You me up!” But that is not all. It is our feet that made the danger, as well as the way. A strong, well-footed man can traverse the precipitous mountain side and never think of a slip. Have you not seen the mountaineer go tripping up the rocks, with a heavy load upon him, as firmly-footed as if he had been climbing the steps of the Royal Exchange?

Have you not seen him come leaping down, again, with his alpenstock, where you could not have trod for a minute? It seemed as if scarcely a rabbit or a chamois could have found a pathway, and yet the strong, surefooted man has almost danced down beneath his burden. How often have I envied the Alpine peasant those legs and feet! It is much the same in spiritual things. Strong men stand on their high places and leap from crag to crag—but as for us, we are not strong or sure-footed. Alas! We have feeble knees and hands that hang down! And often we are as weak as water. We are children whose tottering footsteps are not as yet familiar with running or climbing. It is as much as we can do to stand when leaning on the Beloved—but to stand upright upon a rough road has not yet come to such feebleness as ours!

I speak not of you all, but of far too many. The most of us are poor puny things. Ah, if you know yourself, you will not think that you can stand. It will rather be a wonder to you that you have not already fallen! And when you see others slip, your heart will be in your mouth, for you will say, “I am next—I next, unless the Grace of God prevents.” So, what with the way and our feet, we have need to pray, “Hold You me up!” But that is not all, for there are cunning foes that seek to trip us up. They lay snares for us—they dig pits and cast their nets across the way. Perhaps some of you are happily free from tempters in your own households and possibly some are free from distinct temptation from the world. I congratulate you! But very few of us are in that condition.

Our foes compass us about like bees. Some threaten; others flatter. A few would bribe us; more would bully us. The bad would deceive, for they put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. And the best of men, if you follow them too closely, may mislead you. Trust not in any brother—neither lay hands upon any human guide. There is One that can conduct you safely, but if you do not follow Him, you will soon slip with your feet. Many watch for our slipping and if they could find us tripping they would report it with glee to all the sons of Belial! Therefore have we good need to say, “Hold You me up.” Specially is there such need to those of you who work in shops where ungodliness is in the ascendant so that religion is held in ridicule. Great need is there in the cases of children of ungodly parents with a father who will, if he can find you doing a little amiss, make a great deal of it. Equal necessity is there to you young men who meet with conceited ones who talk philosophy and rail at our old-fashioned faith. You should pray, “Lord, hold You me up, and I shall be safe.”

Nor is this all, though it is quite enough, for sometimes, dear Friends, the difficulty of keeping our balance is not caused by the way, itself, but by the height to which God may elevate us. There are Brothers whose position is high whose brain might, long ago, have reeled had not infinite Mercy held them up. I know those who have not a tenth of their popularity or a hundredth part of their influence who, nevertheless, give themselves mighty airs. These lofty-minded gentlemen are in the greatest danger! Let me speak of these grandees—with all due reverence let me take them at their own value for once—though I should be sorry to be forced to complete the purchase.

My dear Friend, when you are getting on in the world and prospering, something whispers, “You are a clever fellow.” And when you have won respect by your talent, then, again, a voice sweetly sings, “You are a highly superior person.” At such times you are in serious peril! It happens to most of us, at times, to have done so well as to have won the approbation of our little circle. And then the temptation is quite great enough—though it comes not from thousands, or even from hundreds, but from halfdozens—for us to feel that we are somebody, too. Then the brain grows dizzy and the danger is great! Anything which leads to self-esteem leads to the utmost jeopardy. If you have a lowly opinion of yourself, I congratulate you—for this is a main element of safety.

The prayer is all the more necessary for one other reason, namely, that the most of people do not keep upright. Go forth into the world tomorrow and see how men are acting! Borrow the lantern of Diogenes and try, if you can, to find an honest man! You will succeed, but when you have done so, take security for his keeping so. On the exchange, in the market, almost everywhere—the bulk of men are not upright—they are down on all fours. There is a great gold scramble and they are clutching at it with all their might! Get money! Get money! Is not that the world’s own favorite teaching—get it honestly if you can—but, if you cannot, get it in that way, get it how you can! Puff! Lie! Cheat! Do anything, only make a fortune! He is the most clever fellow who can grab the most gold!

That is the picture of the business world—a nursery floor of grown-up children scrambling on all fours. But you say they do not lie. No, no—only white lies. No, they do not cheat—it is only, “the custom of the trade,” you know. “Now, do not talk,” they say to me, “what do you know about it?” More than you think, perhaps, for lookers-on see more than players. “But, Sir, business is business.” I know it is, and business has no business to be such business as it often is! Woe to the man whose business will destroy his soul! Woe, double woe, to the man whose business destroys the bodies and souls of drunks! Woe three times over to the wretch who fattens on the iniquities of his fellow men and gets rich by their damnation— and yet pretends to religion!

But I am wandering—it is because so many people lean this way, or that way, or go altogether on all fours, that it is not the easiest thing in this world for a man to stand upright. He ought to say, “If the world’s fate hung on a lie and I, by speaking the lie, could save it, I would speak the truth.” If our life depended upon doing what God would not approve, we ought rather to die than sin! Such should be the resolve of the Believer and he should ask for Grace to carry it out. Lord, hold You me up: keep me upright. Whatever happens, do not let me be any other than an upright, downright, perpendicular man, knowing the right thing, speaking the right thing, doing the right thing, by Your Grace, even to the end.

But you see the danger—the text suggests it to me. To my ear there is a sharp sound in it. It is almost a cry of sudden alarm. It is as if one felt himself falling and cried aloud, “Hold me up!” The deep descent yawns before him; the earth glides from under him; he cannot regain his footing and piteously he implores, “Hold You me up.” It has come to this— there is an end of the man unless a Power beyond his own shall uphold him. O Lord, see You to it! Now, how does God keep His people upright? He has many ways of doing it and, therefore, you may pray very hopefully. He can preserve you by angels—“They shall bear you up in their hands, lest at any time you dash your foot against a stone.”

How many stones you and I might have dashed our feet against if it had not been that we have received mysterious intimations which have put us on our guard. Often and often have I been inwardly admonished and so preserved from evil. We never knew where it came from, but perhaps the Lord sent the singular intimation by an angel whose noiseless wings came and went, and we knew not of the messenger, though we felt the message. God works mightily this way with many who are obedient to His will. At other times God holds up His people by the ministry of the Word of God. I have often been told that when you have come in here, I, not knowing anything of your case, have, nevertheless, spoken to it exactly—and you have had the admonition, or the encouragement and direction which you needed at this point and that.

To many of you my voice has been as the Oracle of God and that in the verse of a hymn, or in the chapter chosen, or in a pointed remark in the sermon. Is it not so? Could not many of you bear testimony to it? God’s Word, wherever it is faithfully spoken, is a wall of fire round about God’s people. It protects them from lurking foes of whose existence they were not aware. A gracious promise supplies them with just that stimulus which they need in the hour of fainting or a stern rebuke acts as the restraint which they require in the moment of temptation.

And have you not found it so, too, by the reading of the Word in your own homes? The promise or the precept has come in exactly to fit your case and you have heard from the Scriptures a voice that said, “This is the way: walk you in it.” And you have also been gently made willing to walk in it and so you have been kept in your integrity. Were professors more familiar with their Bibles, they would be less in danger from the common evils of the times. Oh that the Holy Spirit may give us all a deeper love for the Word of God so that we may be upheld that no iniquity may have dominion over us!

Often God keeps His people upright, and holds them firmly, by chastisement. When roughly smitten you feel as though you were a child falling over a precipice, half dazed by terror. And then your father has taken hold of you and, by severely shaking you, has awakened you and saved you. I have seen a driver give a horse a flip because he was getting sleepy and had stumbled—that cut woke up the creature and he went with a sure foot afterwards. The Lord has often saved us from a sad fall by a sharp chastisement. “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept Your Word.” At times, the chastisement has been rather of the spirit than of anything outward. All things have gone well externally, but you have been depressed and despondent—and that drooping has been ordained by God that you might endure your prosperity and truly prosper in it. Lest your high places of success should cause you to slip, you have been kept low in spirit that you might be kept up in holy living to God’s Glory! You have been laid down that you might not fall down!

God sometimes humbles His people that they may not need to be humbled, for to be humbled is terrible, but to be made humble by His Grace is exceedingly sweet. It is clear that our gracious Lord can hold us up by many methods. We are very far from having hinted at a tenth of them. I have known Him preserve His people by giving them great aspirations, high ideals, noble desires. With his eyes on the stars, the sailor boy is steady at the masthead. I have known Him hold up His servants by giving them plenty to do—by putting them into the Sunday school and interesting them with the children or drafting them into the Loan Tract Society and keeping them there. It is a grand way of keeping us right—never to let us have an idle 10 minutes, nor a spare napkin to wrap a talent in.

The supreme Power which upholds us is the Holy Spirit, who, dwelling in us, warns us against evil; sets us on our watchtower against temptation; incites us to all manner of good things and so helps us to stand in the evil day. How much we owe to the love of the Spirit! He keeps the feet of the saints. When they are tried, He quickens them, and by gaining more life they surmount temptation! When they are likely to be deceived, He enlightens them, and so the Evil One touches them not. By sanctification, by helping our infirmities, by teaching us the Divine will and by His Divine comfort, He holds us up—and to Him be Glory forevermore!

Thus have I shown you the danger and how it can be prevented. Oh, how sweetly can the Lord prevent it, and how He has prevented it in many of His dear people! In order to prove this, I could point you to biographies of godly men. Perhaps that might be better than giving you even a hint about those who are yet alive, though there are many such, and such among ourselves. As to the departed ones upon whom my mind is now resting, their Lord did not allow them to slip at any time, but their garments were always white. They had many dangers and perils, but they walked uprightly all their days. So far from their having slipped, there seemed to be nothing in them but what we could hold up for admiration, giving to God’s Grace all the praise!

Blessed are those men of faith who are never allowed to fall, in whom you see no groveling, whose noble lives are free from selfishness and far above the aims of carnal men! In them was no bending, no stooping from uprightness, but a rising, a growing elevation, till even here, among the sons of men, they had a dignity and presence as of another world. Thus have I set before you the upholding.

II. Briefly, I desire to show the TWO BLESSED THINGS THAT COME OUT OF THIS HOLDING UP. If God uphold us, then, according to the text, we shall be safe. “Hold You me up, and I shall be safe.” It is a great point to be safe, though there

 are some who prefer to be sharp. Some men are always trying little dodges by which they would take advantage of their neighbors. “A sharp fellow, that,” cries one. “A desperately clever man,” says another. “Hardly know where to find him,” hints a third. “Rather sharper than honest,” mutters a fourth. Just so.

Now, if God holds you up, I do not say that you will be clever, but you will be what is a deal better—you will be safe. “Hold You me up, and I shall be safe.” That is, you will be safe from all real harm. Suppose that you should meet with great troubles in business? You will still be safe if God upholds you so that you do not lose your integrity. So long as we do not lose a good conscience, we have not lost much if we have lost all. He that damages his character has sustained the worst damage a mortal man can know! But he that is held up—kept upright—has been kept safely! It may be that he shall be slandered, but if he knows that before God he has walked uprightly, he shall be “safe.” God will light his candle in due time and his light shall shine as the sun at noonday! Only if you hold fast your integrity and will not let it go—and God’s Grace can help you to do that— you shall be safe in calamity, peaceful in panic, happy in poverty, brave under slander—in fact, “safe” in all senses of the term!

Like the lighthouse on the lone rock, buffeted by the storm, you shall stand out above all tempests SAFE. You shall be safe, too, from descending into grievous sin. The man who is held upright shall not insensibly sink lower and lower, as some do. Alas, I have seen the godly man put forth his hand unto iniquity. At first he seemed excused. No one could blame him. It was an hour of dire necessity and that he was overcome and did a questionable thing was not much to be marveled at, though it was enough to make an angel weep that such a man as he should stoop to it. After once doing the questionable thing, he had spoiled the chastity of his conscience, and he was open to a grosser sin—and he fell into that grosser sin—yet, still, it was not such a fault as the world would much condemn. A little farther and but a little farther, and he committed a crime that made the godly cast him off and the wicked exult over him. “Howl, fir tree, for the cedar is fallen!”

For you and for me there is no safety in any degree of bending. We must stand upright or we cannot stand at all! “Hold You me up”—up, up—“and I shall be safe.” But if I begin to incline downward in any way I am not safe. He that leans will fall! But the upright will stand, for God is able to make him stand even unto the end. I believe that when David said that by being held up he should be safe, he meant, also, that he should know that he was safe and should enjoy great restfulness of heart. Dear Brothers and Sisters, I know that you are very much tried in this world and often tempted to do that which is not right. But, if God keeps you from evil, how happy you are, because you are “safe”! You have a light pocket, but a light heart, too! Some have a heavy purse and a heavy heart to go with it. It is better for you to be in poverty and to be holy, than it would be to be unholy and to roll in wealth.

May God give you things convenient for you—so would I pray—but I would not ask Him to give you even a necessary meal as the result of an evil deed, much less to succeed you in a dishonest transaction, for nothing can be worse than to do wrong and prosper in it! If you are a child of God, there is no prosperity for you except by doing that which is right. Others may hoard the wages of unrighteousness. They would melt like hoarfrost in your hands. May you be prospered in all your works and may your substance increase. If God ordains it, so will it be. And if it is not so, what a mercy it is to carry in your heart that little bird which sings, “All is well! All is well!” He that can pick a bit of heartsease from within his bosom and wear it in his buttonhole, need not envy my lord his stars and garters—for that herb called heartsease is more precious than all else that grows beneath the moon—and God makes it bloom in the garden of the man who walks uprightly!

The man that walks uprightly and is kept in God’s way, is “safe,” and I venture to give another meaning to that word, “safe”—namely, that he becomes a safe man in his dealings with others. If you catch a man playing the double shuffle at any time, let him play it for himself, but not for you! Never link yourself in business with a person who is capable of doing an unrighteous action. Sink or swim for yourself, but never set foot on board such a coffin ship! Sooner or later it will go to the bottom. May God make you to be upright, that you may be a safe man, true and trustworthy, for men delight to trust in men when once they find them “safe.”

If you would possess the best of human friends, you will be happy should you meet with the man who in youth was an ardent Christian and has continued so throughout a generation. In times of stress and trial when others fell, he stood upright and incorruptible. Under slander he has smarted, but he has outlived the reproach and disproved every false report. Today his name is the guarantee of truth, the watchword of honor! Where he leads, others feel it safe to follow! They wait till he speaks; his judgment rules the board. Because the Lord kept him upright, he grew to be safe in the esteem of his neighbors and now he is as a hiding place from the wind and a cover from the storm. A truly good man is a haven in trouble, a harbor for those who are tossed with tempest—the sons of Adam in distress fly to him, in his degree, as they do to his Master. If he swears to his own hurt, he changes not, but stands to the truth at all hazards. Men admire this and they trust him, if not with untold gold, yet with secrets which, to all other hearts, remain untold. May God make you such a man! The way to such honor lies by that prayer, “Hold You me up, and I shall be safe.”

But, lastly, when a man knows that he is “safe,” by God’s Grace, does he then become idle and careless, and think he may do as he likes? No, listen—“I shall be safe, and I will have respect unto Your statutes continually.” Watchfulness attends such sacred safety and is, at once, its fruit and its sign! A holy man—a man made holy by God’s Grace—has great respect to every command of God! Before he moves, he looks round him to see whether he shall transgress by his proposed movement. You have heard of the child whose mother said, “John, you have broken one of the Commandments,” and he answered, “Mother, those Commandments are awfully easy to break.” With such natures as ours, sin is a very easy thing. You break the Law before you know it—and unless a man has respect unto all the Commandments, he will soon be trespassing and getting into mischief.

We ought, in our daily life, to walk as one that has to tread among eggs or delicate china. Heedless and Too-Bold soon rush into sin, but the genuine Believer always fears. “You are very jealous of how you act,” said one to a saint of God. “Yes,” he replied, “I serve a jealous God.” “You are too precise,” said another. “That is a crime,” he said, “that God will never charge any of His children with.” A conscience tender as the apple of an eye is what we want. To be alarmed, even at the distant approach of sin, is the safeguard of a child of God! Those who dally with vice will rue such dalliance when it cannot be undone! If somebody told me that there was a cobra at the far end of my room, I should look round for the door—I think such venomous creatures are near enough if they remain in their native jungles—I do not desire their interesting society.

So should it be with sin. We should flee from it at once, avoiding its first appearance, hating it in thought and word before it hatches into act, abhorring even the garment spotted by the flesh! This holy jealousy to do the Lord’s will must last continually. “I will have respect unto Your statutes continually.” I will always try to obey. I will always endeavor to avoid any transgression of the Light of God. Now, dear Friends, you see this safety comes, and this special tenderness towards God’s Law comes of God’s holding us up, for He holds us up so that we never go down. Under His incessant upholding we shall be “safe”—and we shall be conscientious—but not otherwise. A few minutes’ folly may ruin years of character. The man that is not held up goes down and rolls in the mire. He is never a conscientious man or a “safe” man, perhaps, for the rest of his life.

I know some that I hope are God’s people, but they have not been upheld so as to be always complete in their integrity and, consequently, they are not “safe.” They are people that we have to watch over with great care, for we are afraid of them. We could not trust them to lead, for their example is a lame one. Moreover, they are not keenly, sensitively conscientious. They can go to much greater lengths than the Lord Jesus would approve and yet they are members of the Church—pretty talkative members, too. May God improve them and mend them! They need it and God, alone, can do it, for they do not take their minister’s plain hints. These people have no clear and sharp discrimination of what is right and wrong according to God’s way, but they go as far as they can towards the world—to enjoy the pleasures of the ungodly—and yet they would keep in with Christians.

They are Jacks-of-Both-Sides. They run with the hare and yet hold with the hounds, and they will be glad to have a mouth full when the hounds catch the hare. This is poor work! This produces a sorry sort of Christian! Under such double influences we shall be unsafe and rather a curse to others than a blessing to them. If our integrity is always maintained by God, we shall become safe men—the pillars of the Church—we shall have a tender conscience that will warn us of the approach of evil and we shall be such as God can honor and make useful to the Brethren. So I close by commending to you, my dearly Beloved in Christ, the prayer of the text, “Hold You me up.” Every morning before you see the face of men, register this prayer in Heaven—“Hold You me up, and I shall be safe, and I shall have respect unto Your statutes continually.”

Are you going downstairs without that prayer? Then you may fall into sin at the breakfast table! You may lose your temper and a trifle not worth noticing may put you off the tram lines for the day. Therefore pray before the car moves. You have taken your hat and your gloves and you are going off to the City. Does it happen that there you meet careless, godless men? Are you tempted there? Then as you get into your train, or as you trudge along the pavement, breathe the prayer, “Hold You me up, and I shall be safe.” You can meet the worst of men without fear. You have your shield on your arm, and the two-edged sword of God at your side! You are prepared for all hazards now that the upholding prayer has been breathed before the Most High!

Did you say that you are not going to the City today? It is a day’s excursion, is it? You are going into the country to see friends, or you are to make holiday with a few companions? All well and good. You may have such recreations very properly—but now is a special time for the prayer— “Hold You me up.” Your friends will not be all saints, probably, and when they go a little way in mirth, perhaps they will run a little too far. Therefore, entreat the Keeper of Israel, now, “Hold then me up, and I shall be safe”—safe at my play as well as at my work. The child of God in his recreation should prove that he has undergone a re-creation which has made him a new creature in Christ Jesus. Grace should enter into all our enjoyments as well as into all our employments.

No, but that does not happen to be your lot. You are not indulged with a day’s pleasure—you are going to perform a service surrounded with difficulty. It tries your brain and frets your heart. It is more than you feel at all able to carry through and yet you must do it. Now is your peculiar time of need! Now is the hour to pray, “Hold You me up.” I have known young Brothers who, when first they have gone to a bank, have been so anxious to have their balances right and when they have gone round collecting have been so careful to be correct that they have made great errors—not through any dishonesty, but simply through their blundering because they were so excited! In their consuming anxiety to be exact, they have confused themselves into errors! Let the gracious young man do right and leave himself with God. Do not be nervous, but be prayerful.

Ask the Lord to help you. Ask Him to help you about everything—about casting up a column of figures. My Lord Jesus counts the very hairs of His children’s heads and He will help them in their little things as well as in their great things! You may ask that you may have favor in the sight of those that employ you and God will give it to you if it is good for you. Only cry, “Lord, help me to do right! And if I make a mistake let it be a mistake—but You hold me up and upright to the end.” Perhaps, dear Friends, you have to travel this week over a very unwelcome road, for you have been over it before and wished that you had never seen it. And yet you have that journey in prospect and there is no avoiding it! You have to visit those dangerous friends who led you into sore temptation two years ago. You have to undergo, the second time, an experience which before led you into sin. Then, pray eagerly, “Hold You me up.” Ask for double Grace! You know the danger of the road and your own feebleness, but you will get over it well enough by God’s upholding Grace.

But it may be, dear Friends, that you are prospering. God is giving you success and the desire of your heart has come to you. Be sure to pray earnestly, “Hold You me up, and I shall be safe” for it is a dangerous thing for a child of God to prosper in this world! And yet it is a danger which many unwisely covet. If you are growing rich and great, pray God to hold you up. Or it may be that you are now going down into adversity. Things have gone wrong with you, as you think. You have to give up that fine house and lovely garden. You are moving into small rooms. You still have expenses, but your income has shrunk terribly. You hardly know how you shall support your wife and children. Now pray, “Hold You me up.” Use the prayer of Agur—“Give me neither poverty nor riches.” He that kept you when you were rich will not shun you, now that you are poor! Ask Him to uphold you still. He is able to do it and as willing as He is able.

Ah, some of you are getting old—I respectfully commend to you this prayer as suitable for the close of life. Young people, you must pray, for your passions are strong and your wisdom is little. O young men and maidens, pray, each one of you, “Hold You me up.” But, oh, dear aged Brothers and Sisters, excuse me who am so much younger, when I solemnly add—to you is this word of warning sent! Cease not to plead for upholding Grace! Horses sometimes fall at the bottom of the hill—the drivers grew careless and thought there was no further need for caution— and down went the horse.

The worst falls I have ever seen in the Church of God have happened to elderly men, men of experience and years. All through Scripture we meet with cases of the aged falling into sin. Mind that. They boast their experience and wisdom— and then the devil laughs in his sleeve and makes fools of them! If we were as old as Methuselah and as holy as Enoch, we ought still to cry, “Hold You me up!” And when we get to Jordan’s brink and the chill stream begins to rise to our ankles, what a blessing it is that the Lord will hold us up! “Courage, Brother!” said Hopeful to Christian, when he was up to his neck in the stream—“Courage, my Brother! I feel the bottom and it is good.” And so they joyfully crossed over and climbed the hill whereon the Celestial City was built!

And there, I think, among the songs that we shall sing unto our WellBeloved, this will be a peculiarly sweet one—  
*“When I said,  
My foot slips!  
Your mercy, O Lord,  
Held me up.”*

“Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His Glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be Glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.”

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HOLY LONGINGS  
NO. 2151

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 29, 1890, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for Your commandments. Look You upon me, and be merciful unto me, as You used to do unto those that love Your name. Order my steps in Your Word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.”  
Psalm 119:131, 132, 133.**

LAST Lord’s-Day we spoke about being in the fear of God all the day long and I am afraid some thought, “The pastor has set a very high standard before us—not too high, but still far above what we have been able to reach.” I know that many desires after holiness were excited and many longings of heart went up to Heaven. It ought to be so as soon as the Truth of God is received into the mind. Note the context—“The entrance of Your Word gives light; it gives understanding unto the simple.” And then the next step is intensity of desire—“I opened my mouth and panted: for I longed for Your commandments.”

When we have light enough to see what holiness is and how desirable it is, then we should hunger and thirst after it. To be holy is to go to the University—to have a desire for it is to go to a preparatory school for children—and to labor and agonize for it is to go to the grammar school. I want to teach the young children and get them ready for that grammar school, that their course may be clear for the University of actual holiness of life. I shall not take you to the grammar school of strong desire with the view of your stopping there, but that I may coach you up, by God’s good Spirit, for the University of attainment where you will be “in the fear of the Lord all the day long.”

Here we have David desiring, praying, pleading and setting forth very clearly what he pants after. May you and I have the same burning desires. May we pant. May we thirst and at the same time may we clearly know what we are panting for, so that we may the more intelligently pursue it and thus go the nearest way to obtain it! May the Holy Spirit, the Author of holiness, help us in our meditations upon these three verses!

In the first verse you have the Psalmist longing intently after holiness— “I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for Your commandments.” In the next verse you have David pleading fervently for the thing that he desired, praying in this fashion, “Look You upon me, and be merciful unto me, as You used to do unto those that love Your name.” In the third verse you have the same man of God enlarging intelligently upon what it was that he pleaded for, giving both the positive and the negative side of it— “Order my steps in Your Word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.”  
I. First, then, we will think of LONGING ARDENTLY AFTER HOLINESS—“I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for Your commandments.” Observe carefully that the man of God longed for the Lord’s commandments. This cannot mean anything else than that he longed to know them, longed to keep them, longed to teach them, longed to bring all around him into obedience to them.

Many religious people long after the promises and they do well, but they must not forget to have an equal longing for the commandments. It is a sad sign when a man cannot bear to hear of the precepts, but must always have the preacher touching the string of privileges. To the renewed man it is a privilege to receive a command from the Lord whom he serves—and a great Grace to have the will and the power to obey it. To us Divine Grace means a power which sways us, as well as a favor which distinguishes us. To me the greatest privilege in all the world would be perfect holiness. If I had my choice of all the blessings I can conceive of, I would choose perfect conformity to the Lord Jesus, or, in one word, holiness.

I do not think I should have made Solomon’s choice of “wisdom,” unless it included wisdom of moral and spiritual character—and that is holiness. I said to a young girl the other day, “Are you perfect?” She answered that it was her greatest desire to be so, though she had not yet attained it. Just so. And that hallowed desire shows which way the heart is going. No unrenewed heart ever sighed and cried after holiness! A mere passing wish is of but little worth—I am speaking of the intense and continual desire of the heart. We must strive after holiness with an agony of desire. Oh, to be rid of every sin! What is that but Heaven? Oh, to escape cleanly from every tendency to it and from every trace of it! This would be bliss. What more of happiness could we desire than to fulfill that Word of our Lord—“Be you perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect”?

Are you conscious of great longings to escape from sin? Do you feel far less dread of Hell than of sin? Is sin the worst of hells to you? Is it horrible, terrible, killing? Would it be the heaviest punishment that could be laid upon you if the Great Judge should say, “You are filthy, be filthy still. You are unholy, be unholy still”? It would certainly be the worst of deaths to some of us! The deepest prayer of our hearts is to be delivered from that inbred sin which is tinder in which the sparks of temptation find fuel. We long to be delivered from that law in our members which brings us into captivity to sin. Oh, that we could be like He who said, “The prince of this world comes and has nothing in Me”! How wonderful! “Nothing in Me”!

Alas, the evil prince finds very much of his own in most of us. One of the best men I ever knew said, at 80 years of age, “I find the old man is not dead yet.” Our old man is crucified but he is long a-dying. He is not dead when we think he is. You may live to be very old, but you will have need, still, to watch against the carnal nature which remains even in the regenerate. I heard one speak about feeling angry when provoked and he said “he felt a bone of the old man moving.” Alas, there is more than a bone of it in us—there is the whole body of this death still left—and very palpable, very substantial it does seem to be at times, so that we are forced to cry out, “O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

We need deliverance, not from the bones of it, but from the very body of it which still plagues us. In those longings you see which way the stream of your heart is flowing. In these longings of your spirit you may fully observe the Divine commandments—these desires, I say, show that you have a clean heart and a right spirit—a heart which would do good, though evil is present within you. The tide is running in the right way, though the wind may be blowing against it. Being born of God, you do not commit sin as the tenor of your life, but you strive after that which is pure and good.

Now, observe that the Psalmist, having told us what he longed for, shows the strength of those desires, for he had been so eager in his pursuit of holiness that he had lost his breath. He could not find among men a good figure to describe himself and so he looked among animals and he selected the panting stag as his crest. The hart has been hunted over hill and dale. The dogs have long been close behind it. It has fled, as with the wings of a swift eagle, from their murderous teeth. For a moment it has eluded them. It pauses. It longs to bathe itself in the brook. It is hot, weary and thirsty and therefore opens its mouth wide.

See how it pants! Mark how its breast heaves and its whole body palpitates while it tries to regain its breath! The poor hunted thing is exhausted with its desperate efforts. Have not we, also, at times, felt spent in the struggle against sin? We have not yet resisted unto blood, but we have said to ourselves, “What more can we do? This fierce temptation returns—we may yet be overthrown by it. Oh, that we could take to ourselves wings and fly away! Woe is unto us, for we have no strength.” You were like a man who is out of breath—you were striving beyond yourself after “life more abundantly.”

Accursed is that man who has exhausted body and mind in the race of sin—from that curse he can only escape by looking to Jesus who was made a curse for us! But blessed is that man who has spent all the energy of his being in following after righteousness, for out of weakness he shall be made strong. When he cries, “My foot slips,” the mercy of the Lord shall hold him up. When, like David in the battle with the giant, he waxes faint, the Lord shall cover his head. Meanwhile he opens his mouth and pants out his weariness—and the Lord is with him and He will preserve him alive. Are you ready to faint this morning? Underneath are the everlasting arms! He that faints in such a pursuit as this shall swoon away upon the bosom of his Lord. Be of good comfort.

See, next, how resolved he was. He says, “I opened my mouth, and panted.” He is eager to go onward. Worn out by previous effort, he does not lie down to die but is determined to continue on the move. Give up the struggle? Never! My Brothers and Sisters, we have drawn the sword against the Canaanites of sin and we will never sheathe it until the last of them is slain! It may be a lifelong battle, but we will never make truce or treaty with sin. Woe unto him who says of holiness, “To here shall you come, but no further—and here shall your proud waves be stayed.” We

must never degrade ourselves by saying, “This form of sin cannot be conquered, for it is constitutional—as it was bred in my bones it must be allowed to come out in my flesh.” Brethren, we allow no excuse for ourselves. We will not plead for the life of a single sin—

*“Yes, my Redeemer, they shall die;  
My heart has so decreed!  
Nor will I spare the guilty things  
That made my Savior bleed.”*

Oh, for the holy fury of a sanctified iconoclast who will spare nothing which is opposed to God! We are called to break in pieces every idol, to cast down every grove and to overthrow every altar so that Jehovah may be God alone in the land. I charge you, never compromise with sin—abhor the idea of compromise with error and with evil. If you say, “I will only sin so far,” you might as well say, “I will only take so much poison, or stab myself a few inches deep.” Alas, you have given up the fight when you have come to terms with the foe! A hot temper may be natural, but it must be conquered! An obstinate spirit may be inborn, but it must be cast out! A proud mind may be a family heritage, but it must be laid low! Certain weeds may be indigenous to the soil of your Nature and therefore it may be doubly difficult to extirpate them, but the work must be done. Keep the hoe going—never cease from the determination to uproot the last of them! Even though you open your mouth and pant with weariness, yet keep your face set like a flint towards holiness and let your case be that of one who is “faint, yet pursuing.”

Note that the follower after holiness seeks renewed strength. Why does he open his mouth and pant? Is it not to get more air, to fill his lungs again, to cool his blood and to be ready to renew his running? When you have an hour’s retirement from the battle against sin, spend it in refurbishing your shield and sharpening your sword—for another assault will soon be upon you. We can become strong again. “He gives more Grace.” We are never, for a moment, to suppose that we have exhausted the strength of God when we have exhausted our own. We ought to be all the more earnest to draw upon Divine all-sufficiency!

We are to be like that fabled giant whom Hercules could not overcome for a long while because he was a child of the earth—every time he was thrown down he touched his mother earth and rose with fresh strength. Hercules had to hold him aloft in his arms and there strangle him. Now, whenever you are thrown down and call upon your God in your faintness and weakness, you will find that He restores your soul—“To them that have no might He increases strength.” When cast down we cry, “Rejoice not against me, O my enemy: when I fall, I shall arise.” “When I am weak, then am I strong.” May we realize the truth of that Christian paradox! Brethren, we can overcome sin in the power of the Lord!

The Canaanites have chariots of iron, but Christ has a rod of iron with which He can break them in pieces. Sin is strong, but Divine Grace is stronger. Satan is wise, but God is All-Wise. The Lord is on our side, therefore let us open our mouth wide and take in another draught of Heaven’s reviving air! Let us bathe in the Water of Life! Let us drink from the smitten Rock and in thus waiting upon the Lord we shall renew our strength. Has He not said, “Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it”? When our desires are after the best things, we may expect the Lord to meet with us and grant us times of refreshing from His Presence. In remembrance of these visitations and the time of intense desire which preceded them, we can say, “I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for Your commandments.”

The Psalmist was dissatisfied with his attainments. Brethren, may we never be content with ourselves. We are satisfied with the Word of God. We are satisfied with the Gospel of God. We are satisfied with the favor of God. We are satisfied with the Christ of God. But we shall never be satisfied with our own personal condition till we wake up in the likeness of the First-Born Son! Satisfaction with self is the death of progress! He that is not content with his place in the race will push forward. But he that is proud of his position in the running will soon flag and fall behind. Like the man on the bicycle, we must keep going—to stop is to drop. On! On! On! You are only safe as the wheel spins round and you throw the miles behind you.

My text is not the utterance of one who is sitting in his armchair with the motto on the wall behind him, “Rest and be thankful.” As for the man who feels as the Psalmist did, his mind is far away in the land beyond him. His opened mouth and panting heart speak of desires which are not as yet fulfilled. Yet, let no tinge of discouragement mingle with your dissatisfaction—

this man is hopeful of better things. He opens his mouth because he looks for something to fill it! He pants because he believes in brooks which will relieve his thirst. Wise men will only pant for that which it is possible to attain. We are not Quixotical—we have set out on no romantic expedition. We do not shoot at the moon nor aim at an absurd ideal. We are not even rash like those who seek the North Pole and risk their lives for a dream.

Brothers and Sisters, God can make us holy! Few of us have any adequate idea of what we may become, even here, by Divine Grace. The possibilities of sanctification are seldom explored, but the mass of professors are content with small things in this direction. When a man asks me, “Can I be perfect?” and looks as if he would lead me into a debate upon the subject, I try to find out what manner of man he is before I answer him. If he is worldly, given to appetite, an angry man, a hard man, a proud man, or a lover of his own supremacy I smile at the question as coming from him. I picture to myself a man who slept under a hedge last night, whose pockets are full of emptiness, whose clothes would disgrace a rag bag, out at elbows and beggarly—and this gentleman wishes to discuss with me the question—“Is great wealth attainable by an ordinary working man?” I cannot see what the question has to do with him!

He of the rag bag says, “You know, Sir, we cannot all acquire 10,000 a year.” “No, my dear fellow, it would seem that we cannot all save 10 pence, much less 10,000 a year. Had you not better get a pair of shoes for your feet before you talk about thousands? These are great words from a very

little man.” When you are not doing what you might do, why speculate about what is possible or impossible? When a man has not enough Divine Grace to make change for a sixpence, he may waive all question about the millions of spiritual perfection! Do you cry, “Can I be perfect”? I answer, leave that question until you are much further on the way to it than you are now. Do not be distressed by the fear that you may by accident become better than you should be!

I will insure against that calamity at a very low rate. Have faith in God and say, in His name, “If perfect holiness is possible, I will have it. If it can be reached on earth, I will reach it.” All that the Spirit of God can make of such a poor sinner as I am, it is my desire that He should make. I gladly submit myself and all that I have to His gracious operation. Brothers and Sisters, do you not say the same? I would like to have a very dissatisfied congregation at this time—I wish that everybody here would go out of this Tabernacle grumbling at himself! I would like to hear each one say, “It will not do—I must get out of this! I must rise to a higher condition—I must be more Christ-like! I must have less and less of self.”

Brethren, may we be burning with an insatiable desire to be holy and may we say with the Inspired penman, “I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for Your commandments.”

II. Desire, where it is real, will soon embody itself in prayer. Therefore we find the Psalmist PLEADING FERVENTLY FOR THE HOLINESS HE DESIRED. Here are his breathings: “Look You upon me, and be merciful unto me, as You used to do unto those that love Your name.” You see, dear Friends, he believes in God’s power to bless him and therefore he turns to Him and cries, “Look You upon me.” Is that all? Is a look sufficient? Listen to me and I will show you that there is much in a look. Is it not written, “Look unto Me, and be you saved”?—that is our look to God! If our looking to God saves us, what will not God’s looking at us do?

If there is so much power received by the eye of faith, how much will be given by the glance of love from God? Think not little of a look from God. A look—only a look! Yes, but it is from Him. Remember what a look from Christ did for Peter. He did but look on him and swearing Peter turned to weeping Peter in a moment! Great sinners may be grateful for a look, for it is more than they deserve. Great saints may rejoice in a look, for it means much when the eyes which look are the eyes of Omnipotent Love! “Look You upon me.” The favor of God is a choice means of sanctification.

While affliction is greatly used of God to cleanse the heart, yet a very noble, soul-filling sense of the love of God is the truest sanctifier in the hands of the Holy Spirit. If you know that God loves you with an everlasting love, you will love the Lord and hate every false way. If you walk in the light of His Countenance, you will walk in the way of His commandments. If God’s love is shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit, like sweet perfume, your life will be fragrant with it. It will become natural for you to please Him who loves you infinitely and immutably! Blessed is that man upon whom God looks—I mean, looks with an eye of favorable regard. Lord, look on me and say, by that look, “I have called you by your name, you are Mine,” and this will cause me to keep in Your way! That is what the Psalmist is here praying for! The Lord can sanctify us with a look of love. His choice makes us choice—His love fills us with love.

Observe that the pleader appeals to mercy. Let me draw your attention to the text, “Look You upon me, and be merciful unto me.” To be delivered from the power of sin is the greatest of mercies. Sin is a misery from which we can only be saved by mercy. “Be merciful unto me.” We have no claim upon the Lord by way of merit—our appeal is to His Sovereign Grace. We have no rights—these we forfeited by our treason against our King. We plead, as the courts say, “in forma pauperis,” or as the poor man seeks help from pity.

Our appeal is ad misericordiam—to mercy and compassion. When you come before God in prayer, seeking sanctification, base your request upon His mercy—“Lord, You have done much for me. Do still more and make me holy. I have not profited by Your discipline as I ought to have done. Deal with me in patience. I am poor material for the potter’s skill, but exercise Your long-suffering and bear with me and go on with Your work of Grace until You have made me a vessel fit for Your use.” It is truest, wisest, safest for us to appeal to mercy. The best of saints are sinners, still, and sinners always need mercy.

Then he pleads as one who loves God. He asks God to deal with him, saying, “As you used to do unto those that love Your name”—implying that he is one of them. Come, dear Friends, are you of the number of the lovers of the Lord? Do you love God’s name?—that is to say, His Character and His revealed will? “Yes, that I do,” cries one, “God is my exceeding joy and I delight in His Law after the inward man. His holiness was once terrible to me, but now I admire it and delight in it. Oh, that I were a partaker of it to the full!” You see the man’s character by the way in which his heart takes its pleasure! If any man truly loves God he will grow like God. The revealed Character of God is, to some of us, a joy forever—and this is a sure mark of Divine Grace.

We are not what we ought to be. We are not what we want to be. We are not what we hope to be. We are not what we shall be—but we do love the name of the Lord—and this is the root of the matter. We shall be like He, for we love Him. Thus the very fact that the Lord has filled us with love to Himself is a plea for further Grace to keep His commandments. The Psalmist employs the grand plea of use and custom, for he says, “As You used to do unto those that love Your name.” Use and custom generally have great weight in a court of law. A friend said to me, “How will such a suit go? The case has never been before a court until now?” I answered, “Are you sure that what was done is according to universal and longcontinued custom? For, if so, though there is no law, the custom of the trade will stand.”

Custom among men reaching far back holds good in court—how much shall the custom of the eternally unchanging God decide His future acts! The Psalmist pleads the Lord’s own custom! And this is a grand plea with Him because He is unchanging. Whatever He has done He will do—and

His having done it is a pledge that He will do it again—unless there is any declaration to the contrary. The Psalmist seems to say, “You are in the habit of helping those that love Your name. Lord, help me. It is the way of You to sanctify Your people. Lord, sanctify me! When saints desire to be holy, You are accustomed to grant their desires. Lord, grant mine, for I have the same desires!” Is not this a good plea—“Be merciful to me, as You used to do unto those that love Your name”? If you think it a good plea, urge it at the Throne!

This involves another fact— he joyfully accepts God’s method. When you cry to God to help you in your overcoming of sin, you must consent that He shall do it in His own way. Now, if it is His will that sanctification should involve chastisement, are you willing to take it? “Oh, yes!” you say, “Lord, do unto me as You used to do unto those that love Your name. And if it is written, ‘As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten,’ Lord, rebuke and chasten me so long as You do but love me.” We kiss the rod because the Father who uses it deigns to kiss us. We assent to the processes of Divine Grace that we may enjoy the results of Divine Grace. It may so happen that if God sanctifies you, He may have to grind you very small— cheerfully yield yourself to the mill!

If this is the way in which He deals with those that love His name, do not desire any different treatment. As the result, you may become a butt for the ridicule of ungodly men, but of this do not complain—for this has frequently happened unto those that love His name. God sanctifies His people, but not without their own effort in that direction—be willing to make the effort, too. Say, “Lord, I will breakfast with Your children, I will dine with Your children, I will sup with Your children and I will go to bed with Your children hoping to rise with Your children. Lord, take me into Your house and treat me not as a stranger or a guest, but as a child! I do not ask for the best bedroom, nor to have a special feast made for me—I would only share the daily bread of Your little ones.

“If You treat Tour children so-and-so, treat me the same and I will be grateful. I do not ask to go to Heaven without enduring tribulation on the road. I would not pray to be exempted from the general description— ‘These are they that came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.’” We would not have less than the family of love and we cannot desire more! It is enough for a sheep to be fed with the flock, for a child to fare like the rest of the family. Do you see where we have come? Our prayer is that God would make us holy—holy through His favor, holy through His own gracious working. But we leave methods in God’s hands—let Him take His own way, His tried way, His ordinary way, His fixed way—only let Him deal mercifully with us as He used to do unto those that love His name.

Let no one of us demand exemption from the customary tests and trials—  
*“Must I be carried to the skies On flowery beds of ease*

*While others fought to win the prize,  
And sailed through bloody seas?”*  
Do you expect to be crowned without warfare? To be rewarded without labor? You expect what you will never have! Give up such idle dreams and plead the prayer of my text—“Look You upon me, and be merciful unto me, as You used to do unto those that love Your name.”  
III. I thank you for your deep attention—it is greatly helpful to me in my feeble state. Will you bear with me while I conduct you to the third head, which is this—we see the Psalmist ENLARGING INTELLIGENTLY UPON THE FAVOR HE SEEKS. It is a good thing to come before the Lord with a prepared prayer. “A prepared prayer!” cries one. “Would you have us write out our prayers and learn them?” I did not say, or even think of such a thing! But for a man to drop on his knees and to imagine that he can at once pray acceptably without a preparatory thought is for him to deceive himself.  
The best prayer is when a man waits a little and considers, “What do I need? If I had an invitation to visit the Queen and was told that I might ask whatever I pleased of Her Majesty, I should prepare my request. If I wished to make the most of the interview, I should reflect and set my petition in order. I might ask amiss—I might ask for something inconsistent, or something unfit for royalty to bestow—I should therefore turn my prayer over. When you go before God, it is well to know what you are in need of. Our older Brethren used to say in prayer, “We would not rush into Your Presence as the unthinking horse rushes into battle.” I suppose they would not, for, as a rule, they did not make much of a rush at anything! I do not wish to quote the old-fashioned remark so as to revive it, for I have often wished that the old horse had been put into an omnibus and worked to death. Horses are not expected to think and therefore the term, an unthinking horse, was needless! Still, there is something in what the expression meant—we must not go before God without thought and reverent preparedness of heart and mind.  
Now, let us see how the Psalmist puts it. His cry is for holiness and he describes it as being ruled by the Word of God. “Order my steps in Your Word.” The different sects have differing ideas of holiness, but the reality of holiness is only one. It is this—“Order my steps in Your Word.” If we believe God’s Word, we are orthodox. If we practice it we are holy. This Book is the great umpire as to conduct—not the changing moral sentiment of passing generations! Pray God to order your life according to His Word. To this Word we must be conformed. This is our copy to write by—this is the image to which we must be molded.  
He would have holiness in every step of his life—“Order my steps in Your Word.” It is not, “Lord, order my journey as a whole,” but, “Order my steps.” We lose a great deal by lumping things—in the matter of holiness detail is all-important. Brothers and Sisters, I would not only preach a holy sermon, but I desire that every word may be a holy word, every sentence a right sentence. As you believe in the verbal Inspiration of the Bible, so pray for verbal guidance in your speech and minute direction in your actions. The whole Book of Life will be excellent when every line and every letter is ordered according to the Word of the Lord. When we are careless as to the parts we spoil the whole.  
Notice that he would have every step ordered. “Order my steps.” We wish to put the right foot forward, but the right foot to move may not always be that which is called the right. The left foot may sometimes be the right and we must not take things for granted. We wish to put down our right foot in the right place, at the right time, with the right degree of force and turned in the right direction. A great deal of holiness depends upon order, punctuality and proportion. If order is not Heaven’s first law, it is certainly one of its laws and proportion is another.  
Some men’s lives are out of perspective. Do you remember Hogarth’s caricature of a picture without perspective wherein a man appears to be fishing in a river but is really standing far away from it? A sparrow in a tree looks like a huge eagle and a man on the top of a hill is borrowing a light from a candle held out of the window of a house down below on the other side of the river. Without perspective, good drawing is impossible— and without proportion a complete life is impossible. A man may be, in many points, a good man. You may say of him, bit by bit, “Yes, that is good and that is good,” and yet he may have so much of one virtue that it may become a vice—and he may have so little of another virtue that it may be a grave defect. We can never attain to the right proportion of the virtues unless the Lord Himself arranges them in order for us. O Lord, help us! Order our steps!  
We remark that he would have every step full of God— he would have each one ordered of the Lord. He would receive his strength, his motives, his guiding influences direct from the Lord—“Order my steps in Your Word.” Lord, when I put my foot down there, may it be at Your order. And when I move it to another place, may it still be at Your command. Whether here or there, may I only step where You appoint. Let me go nowhere apart from Your Divine guidance and command. “Well,” cries one, “this is difficult.” But, my Brother, although obedience may not be easy, it is free from the far greater difficulties which accompany self-will! A child who will do nothing but what his father commands does not find his course difficult—the difficulty comes in when he wants to follow his own will and to have his own way.  
You cannot serve God and self! If you try it, the mixture is nauseous and injurious. Say, “Lord, I would consult You about everything I think, or say, or do, for then that which I do will not have to be undone—that which I say will not be wished unsaid—and that which I think will not have to be wept over. ‘Order my steps in Your Word.’ Put me under orders. Keep me under orders and never let me escape Your orders.”  
Observe that the last part of the verses is the negative way of describing holiness—“Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.” He would be wholly delivered from the tyranny of sin. Many men are violent against one sin, but the true saint abhors all sin. You are a teetotaler. I am very glad to hear it—you will not allow the sin of drunkenness to have dominion over you. But are you selfish and ungenerous? Have you developed habits of strict economy in regard to religious donations so that you always give a penny where you ought to give a pound? What have you done? You have only changed your idols! You have dethroned one usurper to set up another! If you were once profane and are now hypocritical you have only changed iniquities!  
It is a very curious thing how one sin feeds on another—the death of profligacy may be the resurrection of greed. The flight of pride may be the advent of shameless folly. The man who was lewd, riotous, brawling and irreligious has killed those sins—and on their graves he has sown a handful of a poisonous weed called pride—and it flourishes amazingly! It may be London pride, country pride, or English pride, or American pride—but it is rare stuff to grow—and to grow over the rotting carcasses of other sins. Unbelief may dethrone superstition, but its own reign may be no real improvement upon that of credulity. If you only throw down Baal to set up Ashteroth, what progress have you made towards God? Little does it matter which of the false gods is set up in the temple of Jehovah—He hates them all! The right prayer is, “Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.”  
Some sins are of respectable repute and other sins are disreputable among men. But to a child of God every sin is loathsome. Sins are all what Bunyan calls Diabolonians and not one of them must be suffered to live in the town of Man-Soul. “Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.” I can see the throne set up within the heart of man. Who shall sit on it? It cannot be empty—who shall fill it? This sin, that sin, or the other? No, Lord, help me to keep every intruder out of it! Whether he come as an angel of light or in his true character as the devil, help me to treat every one as an enemy that would seek to supplant You in your dominion over me!  
Oh, that God may reign over us from morn to eve, through every day of every week of every year! “Let not any iniquity have dominion over me,” is a prayer against the reign of sin. Sin will attack us, but sin shall not subdue us, for it is written, “Sin shall not have dominion over you.” You may put up “Trespassers, beware!” but the trespassers will come, do what you may. Still, they shall not be allowed to acquire a right of way through our Nature. If a bird flies over our head, we cannot help it—but we will not let it make its nest in our hair. So a temptation may pass by us, an evil imagination may flit over the mind, but we will not invite evil, nor patiently endure it, nor allow it to lodge in our souls! Our bosom’s throne is for the King of kings, Jesus, the Bridegroom of our hearts! This is our prayer—“Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.”

I fear that many professors have never understood this prayer. One man is a splendid man for a Prayer Meeting, a fine man for a Bible class— but at home he is a tyrant to his wife and children. Is not this a great evil under the sun? Another man is stern and honest and he inveighs with all his might against every form of evil—but he is hard, even to cruelty, with all who are in his power. One is generous and fervent, but he likes a sly drop. Another is good-natured and pleasant, but he puts it on in his bills at times and his customers do not find the goods quite of the quality they pay for. I have known a man who would not work on the Sabbath, but then he never worked on the other six days—and another who never broke the Sabbath, but he broke many hearts by his unkindness. Beware of pet sins! If you let a golden god rule you, you will perish as well as if you let a mud god rule you. Be this your constant cry—“Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.”  
I have done when I say just this. I have been describing these longings, but I have only been taking you to that preparatory school of which I spoke at the commencement. Already some of you are saying, “I do not think I shall make a rapid scholar even at this preparatory school.” The first thing you have to do is to see that you have these longings strong within you. If you have them, thank God for them. To pant and pine after holiness is infinitely better than to be self-righteous! Cultivate these desires and cravings. But, in the next place, never rest content with mere longings. He that really longs is not content to long—he desires to have his desire fulfilled. The only way to be holy—you that have not begun—is to go to a holy God through the holy Mediator!  
Trust in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus and so be reconciled to God by Him who alone can put away sin. Then go again to Jesus and ask Him to renew you in the spirit of your mind and wash you with water from the power of sin, as He has washed you with blood from the guilt of it. When you are washed, take care that you keep your garments unspotted from the world. When you have once known the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, do not return again to folly. Follow on watchfully and resolutely. Seek the daily renewing of the Holy Spirit and so shall you go from strength to strength till you shall be like your Lord and shall see Him as He is.  
May God bless my feeble words and put power into them for your eternal good, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 119:119-136.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—  
42, 119 (SONG II), 119 (SONG III).

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A PAGE FROM A ROYAL DIARY  
NO. 2372

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY, AUGUST 5, 1894. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 17, 1888.

**“Look You upon me and be merciful to me, as You used to do to those who love Your name.”  
Psalm 119:132.**

[“We believe that David wrote this Psalm. It is Davidic in tone and expression and it tallies with David’s experience in many interesting points. In our youth, our teachers called it, ‘David’s pocketbook,’ and we incline to the opinion often expressed that here we have the royal diary written at various times throughout a long life.”—C. H. SPURGEON’S Note in The Treasury of David as to the author of Psalm 119.]

PERHAPS YOU noticed, while I was reading, that during the writing of several of the verses, David occupied himself with the praises of God’s Word. He kept to that point, extolling with all his might those Scriptures in which God had spoken to his heart, but he could not go on long without prayer. If these meditations were written in his pocket-book, day by day, it is noteworthy that although he fervently praises the Word of God, yet he also frequently breaks out into prayer. However the child of God may occupy his mind—and he very properly employs it in many holy occupations—yet he often turns to prayer, for he cannot live without it. Well does Montgomery say—

*“Prayer is the Christian’s vital breath,  
The Christian’s native air.”*

We must pray. Brothers and Sisters, we are bound to praise God for all His goodness. We cannot help bearing testimony to His faithfulness and His Truth. We are delighted to engage in all acts of holy service, but, in addition to all that, we must pray. Prayer is a sine qua non with us—we continually come back to that sacred exercise, for, without it, we are nothing and can do nothing. Therefore, again I say, we must pray.

Notice, also, how brief David’s prayer is, and yet how full of matter! I believe that very often, the longer the prayer is, the less there is in it, and that the best prayers that were ever prayed have usually been the shortest. An arrow may easily be too long and prayers should be like arrows shot from the bow of faith. If they are short, it does not matter, as long as they are sharp and went on their way with a good pull of the bowstring. The first petition, here, is very short, but very full—“Look You upon me.” The words are few, but the sense is deep, as I shall have to show you. Oh, that we all spoke with greater freshness and naturalness in prayer— that we had no thought about keeping on with fine language, but great anxiety as to holding on with a firm grip of wrestling, pleading prayer!

The whole of our text is but short, yet it contains much more meaning than I can bring out to you in this one discourse. I want to call your attention to four things in it. First, David’s brief petition—“Look You upon me.” Secondly, his humble confession (it is not given in so many words, but it lies hidden away like the perfumed violet beneath the green leaves)—“Be merciful unto me,” which is a virtual confession of sin. Thirdly, his tacit profession, for he says, “as You used to do unto those that love Your name,” which is tacitly saying that he loves God’s name, or else he could not pray the Lord to deal with him as He used to do with such people. And, fourthly—and here I shall enlarge somewhat—his gracious aspiration. The highest, loftiest wish that David had was that God would deal with him as He was accustomed to do unto those that love His name. He did not want to fare either better or worse than the rest of the Lord’s family, so he boldly prayed, “Look You upon me, and be merciful unto me, as You used to do unto those that love Your name.”

I. To begin with, here is, in our text, DAVID’S BRIEF PETITION—“Look You upon me.”  
I think that these words came to David’s mouth from his heart and that he prayed, “Look You upon me,” because his own eyes had failed him. Turn to the 123rd verse. If you look at it, you will see that one thing in a saint may suggest another. In that verse he wrote, “My eyes fail,” and in our text he says, “Look You upon me. Lord, when I feel as if I could not look at You, do You look at me! My eyes fail me. I have washed them out with rivers of water, I have flooded them with fountains of grief. Unbelief has come in. I cannot see as I would—the dust of the world and the smoke of care have dimmed my eyes—I seem to grow blind, my Lord, and though I would always look at You and never take my eyes off You, yet my eyes fail me!” In such a case as that, it is so sweet to pray to God, “Look You upon me.”  
Brothers and Sisters, there is great virtue in our looking to Christ—it is the way of salvation! What virtue, then, must there be in Christ’s lovegaze upon us! A faith-look at the blood of Jesus gives us peace, but, as I always remind you, it is God’s sight of the blood that brings us salvation. Did He not say to Moses and Aaron, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you”?—  
*“When your eyes of faith are dim  
Still trust in Jesus, sink or swim.”*  
When you cannot see your God, still say with poor Hagar, “You God see me.” Jehovah is the all-seeing One—remember that and be comforted. If your eyes are put out, His eyes can never be blinded—still does He look upon you with compassion and see you with His eyes of Grace. Again I say, Lord, if ever I should forget to look to You, or if ever I should be in such a state of despondency that I cannot look up to You, look You upon me!  
Next, notice that man’s eyes had misjudged David. I think the Psalmist’s prayer is to be read in this light, that he had been condemned and persecuted by the ungodly and he was evidently under the oppression of man as we noticed in reading the 134th verse—“Deliver me from the oppression of man.” Men had misconstrued his words and misrepresented him, so now he says, “Lord, look You upon me! Whenever evil men look at me, they look with disapproval—they do not see what should be seen, but they see a great deal that is not really there. Lord, I know what they say of me, but You look upon me!” It has fallen to the lot of many of us to pass under the censure of men and the cure for that censure is to cry, “Lord, look You upon me.” Mr. Blind-Man, the foreman of the Vanity Fair jury that condemned Christian’s brother, Faithful, said, “I see clearly that this man is a heretic.” And the blinder bad men are, the more fault they can see in God’s people, even when there is nothing of evil to be seen! They will make it up if they cannot find it and they will swear to it even if they know that it is not so. It is not for a child of God to battle with them about the matter, but to turn his eyes to the Lord who is our only Judge and, with David, to pray, “Look You upon me.”  
Again, do you not think it was this that made the Psalmist pray in this way? He knew that God’s eyes perceive what His servant needs. David opened his mouth and panted—he knew he needed something, but he

hardly knew what it was! At times we do not know how to word our prayers because our sense of need is so very great. It seems idle to ask for one thing when we need everything! When we are quite emptied out, we scarcely know where to begin, and when our case is very puzzling and perplexing, we cannot tell what to ask for when we come to the Throne of Grace. That is a sweet thought, “You, my heavenly Father, know what things I have need of before I ask for them!” Prayer is not for God’s

 information, but for our instruction! We need to be made to learn what our needs are, but God always knows them. It is a very blessed thing, when we cannot tell what our needs are, to utter such a prayer as this, “Look You upon me, O Lord! You will see what I need. You will see wherein I fail. You will see how I struggle. You will see what I suffer. Lord, look You upon me!”

This is also, to my mind, such a lovely and God-honoring prayer because it leaves all with God. David does not say what he thinks the Lord should do. When prayer dictates to God, it has gone beyond its lawful bounds and it is not, then, proper prayer. But the Psalmist prays, “Lord, look You upon me.” When he was very sick, he did not say, “Lord, heal me,” but he prayed, “Lord, look You upon me.” An ordinary physician’s look, alone, is not worth much, but one glance of the Great Physician’s eyes is sufficient to cure all the maladies of the heart! We need the earthly physician’s hand and his medicine and, possibly, the surgeon’s knife. Ah, but we get everything in a look from our Lord!

When Jesus turned and looked upon Peter, did He preach a sermon? He did a great deal more than that! Did He rebuke the liar? He did a great deal more than that! Did He draw the wanderer back to Himself? He did a great deal more than that! Oh, nobody knows how much lies in one look of the eyes of God! Let us, each one, present this prayer tonight—“Lord, here is my case. I do not understand it—I know what I would like—but I am not sure whether it would be right for me to ask for it. I put myself before You—look You upon me. I sit, like the blind man by the wayside, and all I ask is that You will but turn Your face this way and see me where I am, and see what I am. And if You will but do that, do what else You please. I will not dictate to You as to what You should do. I will leave myself and my affairs entirely in Your hands—only look You upon me.”

I think David also meant this petition, “Look You upon me,” in the sense in which we sang just now—  
*“Look upon me, Lord, I pray You,  
Let Your Spirit dwell in mine!”*

In this sense, God’s look will be a sign of Divine favor. Frequently, in Scripture, God is represented as turning His face away in anger. But when He looks towards His chosen ones, it is in love. Brothers and Sisters, is there anything under Heaven more delightful than to be loved by God and to know it? The love of God, in itself, is inexpressibly sweet, but if you do not apprehend it, it is a sea of sweetness of which you do not taste, or like a mountain of honey to which you cannot gain access! But oh, to be loved of God and to know it would make a man dance if he were in chains! It would turn a dungeon into a palace if the poor prisoner were sure that God loved him! And that is precisely what David means when He prays, “Look You upon me..” “...Make Your face shine upon Your servant.” Do you see men scowling, and do you hear them howling? What does it all matter? God is smiling and that is an end to all the oppression of man! One sun soon puts an end to all the darkness. One glimpse of God’s smiling, reconciled, eternally-loving face, drives away all sorrow from the Believer’s heart! The Psalmist’s prayer, “Look You upon me,” means just that.

I think, too, that David meant one thing more, that is, that God’s look could prepare him for future obedience. When David said to the Lord, “Look You upon me,” he meant, “Look at me and see that I am armed for the fight against evil. O Lord, look me up and down, search me all over and see that I do not lack any necessary thing! Look at me inside and outside. Look at my brain, look at my heart, look You upon me to see that there is nothing omitted that will be necessary for my future conduct in the world, in the Church, in the household, or alone with You!”

Does not the Psalmist mean all that I have said? And did I not speak truly when I told you that this little prayer, “Look You upon me,” has much more in it than I can draw out of it in a single discourse? I advise you to pray it as it is, with all the meanings packed away in it—“Look You upon me.” God help you to do so!

II. Our next division is DAVID’S HUMBLE CONFESSION. It is not actually expressed in words, but it is hidden away in his next utterance— “Be merciful unto me.”

The Psalmist’s confession is the link between his first prayer and this second supplication. His prayer grew out of this confession. He prayed to the Lord, “Look You upon me,” because he could not, himself, look to God. And then he added this petition because he realized his need of Divine mercy. “Be merciful unto me.” Do you remember the Savior’s parable, or the fact the Savior described when He said, “Two men went up into the Temple to pray. One of them, the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto Heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, ‘God be merciful to me a sinner’”? Surely David, long before that story was told, was acting it out! He dared not look up to God. He could not look up, or he would not have prayed, “Look You upon me.”

Then he cried, “Be merciful unto me.” By this petition he evidently sought forgiveness. Mercy is only for guilty people. Favor may be for the miserable, but mercy is for the guilty. One said, the other day, “Oh, I am such a great sinner!” And a wise person, who stood by, said, “I am glad to hear you admit it.” “Oh,” answered the other, “but I am lost.” “It is so,” responded the friend, “and I am pleased to hear you confess it.” “And why are you so pleased? It sounds rather cruel to be glad because I am a sinner, and pleased because I am lost.” “Ah,” said the wise Christian instructor, “but Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. He, Himself, said, ‘the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.’” There would be nobody to receive mercy if nobody were guilty! Oh, that you might all feel, whether you are saints or sinners, that the language of the text suits you! “Be merciful unto me.” “Oh,” said one, “I do not think I have been as guilty as some.” Nevertheless, there is no way to Heaven but one—and that way is open for the vilest as well as the most moral. “Be merciful unto me,” is the prayer you must learn to pray if you hope to enter the Kingdom of God!

It is evident, also, that upon this ground, alone, the Psalmist sought for the blessing he desired—“Look You upon me, and be merciful unto me.” Do you see what he means? “Lord, I do not expect a look from You except as a proof of Your mercy. If You only give me a glance of Your eyes, it will be a token of mercy.” If we get a crumb from God’s table, it is a mercy. If we get a promise out of His Word, it is a mercy—if we get anything from the Lord it is a mercy—but if we receive forgiveness of sin, what a mercy that is! Did you ever try to fathom the depth of mercy that lies in the forgiveness of a single sin? There are some sins in our lives which will always be remembered by us. That night when you gave way to that one particular fit of temper which led to that one dreadful act of sin, has God forgiven that? Ah, yes, for “all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” When you cannot forgive yourself, yet you may know that God has, for Christ’s sake, forgiven you. You may have all the more pleasure in knowing that He has forgiven you because you cannot forgive yourself. That sin which overwhelms you and lays you in the very abyss as you remember it—that is the sin God delights to pardon! What a blessing it is that it is so, that we are able to assure you that, “He delights in mercy,” and especially in this particular form of mercy, the blotting out of sin! After David had sinned with Uriah’s wife, or after other great transgressions, this prayer was especially suitable, “Be merciful unto me.”

There I will leave this part of my subject, but I pray God the Holy Spirit not to leave it, but to lay it home to some hearts here. People are getting ready for Whitsuntide—some will be going into the country, and others are obliged to keep their shops open late before the holidays— therefore we are fewer in number, here, than usual, but I have been wondering whether God does not intend to save somebody who has come in here, tonight, because it is the holiday season? The Lord grant that it may be so! What can be more appropriate to you who are conscious of guilt and groaning under the heavy burden of sin, than that you should pray these two petitions of David’s supplication—“Look You upon me, and be merciful unto me”?

III. The third point, upon which I will not detain you long, is DAVID’S TACIT PROFESSION. There is, again, hidden away, here, not uttered in words, but secretly implied, a profession of love for the Lord—“Look You upon me, and be merciful unto me, as You used to do unto those that love Your name”

If the Psalmist does not actually declare that he loves God’s name, he does at least say, “Lord, put me down among them that love Your name. Count me with them. I want to love Your name, O Lord; therefore, treat me as You treat them!”—

*“With them numbered may I be,  
Now, and through eternity!”*

David hardly dares to say that He loves God’s name, but he does practically say it by praying that God will treat him as He treats those who do love His name. Some of those who love God best are not the loudest in proclaiming their love. I believe there are some, here, who would die for Christ if it were necessary, yet they have not had the courage to come out and confess Him. I heard of a good woman who was afraid to testify before the Church, of her faith in Christ. As she was going away, she turned round and said to the minister, “I cannot speak about my faith, Sir, but I would die for Christ.” “Come back,” he said, “come back! That confession is better than any other sort of speaking.”

There have been some, in the time of the martyrs, who have been very loud in their professions, but they have recanted at the last—while others, who have been very timid have been the bravest of all when the burning day came. I remember that one martyr, when chained to the stake with two others, slipped down from under the chain and was hidden by the firewood some two or three minutes. All thought he had recanted, but he came back and placed himself in the chains, again, and stood up boldly to be burned to death. He said to a Brother at his side, “I lost sight of my Lord’s face, and I could not stand there to burn until I had found Him, again. He has come to me so sweetly and now, by His Grace, I shall die like a man.”

If we have Christ with us, how strong we are! But if He is not with us, we are weakness itself! I cannot, therefore, condemn those who are afraid to say very boldly that they love the Lord’s name. I hope, however, that they will have the courage, at any rate, to slip in edgeways and sandwich themselves between some other Believers, and say in the words of the text, “Be merciful unto me, as You used to do unto those that love Your name.”

But the true child of God does love his Lord’s name. What does that mean? He loves God’s name, that is, he loves the Person of God. He loves God! His heart goes out towards the infinitely glorious Jehovah. He loves the Character of God. There are a great many, nowadays, who want Jehovah to be improved upon. When they read of the God of Holy Scripture, they do not like Him—they say they want a kinder and more tender God. These are the men who worship the gods of modern thought—gods newly come up which are more like the devil than the true God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! But the true child of God loves God as he finds Him and as he finds Him in Holy Scripture—the one living and true God who made all things, and by whom all things consist. This is the God we love, adore and worship!

The genuine child of God also loves God’s Revelation. That is often what is meant by the expression, “His name.” He who is right with God loves every Doctrine of the Scriptures and every part of that Doctrine. He does not try to alter and improve the Scriptures, nor to prepare an addendum to the Word of God—he loves the Revelation given to us in the name of God and loves every point of it. By the, “name,” is sometimes meant the Glory of God. I trust that the very feeblest of us can say that we love the Glory of God. When we hear Him praised, our hearts are all aglow. When we hear anything that is said against Him, our indignation burns vehemently, for we love His name. Oh, that God would grant us Grace to love Him far more than we do!

I must not say more on this point, for I have only a little time left, and I need that for the last division of my discourse.  
IV. Fourthly, we are to consider DAVID’S GRACIOUS ASPIRATION. What he asks is that God would be merciful to him as He is accustomed to be to those who love His name. That is our aspiration, too—I trust we want God to deal with us as He deals with the rest of His people.  
Notice, here, that David would be dealt with as saints have always been dealt with. If God treats us as He treats His children, I think we may be perfectly satisfied. There was a time when, if anybody had said to me, “The Lord will put you among His children and treat you as one of them,” I would have been ready to dance for joy! And I do not run back, today, from the solemn conviction that if He will only treat me as He treats the rest of His family, I shall be perfectly satisfied. How is that? How does the Lord deal with His children?  
Well, you know what He used to do to those who loved His name. He used to come and visit them. For instance, there were Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. These all had visits from the Lord, as did Moses, when God was in the burning bush. In olden days, God could be found in the desert or in a bush. He came to His people by the brook side, by the river, in the fiery furnace and in the lions’ den. And it is still the use and habit of God to visit His people! Did He ever visit you? Pray that He may visit you as He used to do to those who loved His name. Lord, come and visit me under a tree, as You met Abraham! Come and meet me beneath the city wall as You met Joshua of old! Come to the river’s brink, as You came to Ezekiel by the river of Chebar! Come to the lonely island, as you did to John in Patmos!  
God not only used to visit those who loved His name, but He used to instruct them. What teachings they had from Him! What revelations and manifestations of Himself! Lord, teach me as You used to teach those who loved Your name!  
How patient, also, He was with them! They had many faults and failings—and they grieved His Holy Spirit—but He forgave them and went on teaching them! And when they fell and wandered from Him, He restored them and brought them back.  
Then you know, dear Brothers and Sisters, the Lord was always faithful to those who loved His name. When He made them a promise, He always kept it. He said He would meet them, and He did. He said that He would help them, and He did. He said that He would strengthen them, and He did. He said that He would give them victory, and He did. He never was a liar to them—He never left them in need. By the mouth of His servant, Jeremiah, He asked, “Have I been a wilderness unto Israel?” He never broke a single condition of His Covenant, so I think we can, each one, pray, “Lord, look You upon me, and be merciful unto me, as You used to do unto those that love Your name!”  
But notice this, also, the Lord used to whip them when they needed it! Those who loved His name were chastened. Asaph said, “All the day long have I been plagued and chastened every morning.” Well, suppose you should have the same treatment? You can thank God that He is doing to you as He used to do to those who loved His name! If He had a child of His who was strong, He used to try and test him. If he was brave, He made him fight. If he was vigorous, He made him bear burdens. You will always find that, in proportion to the strength the Lord gives, so He sets the trial. That is how He used to do to those who loved His name.  
You cannot tell how it has comforted me, sometimes, when it has been said to me, “You are reproached.” “Very well,” I say to myself, “that is how the Lord used to allow it to be done to those who loved His name.” “But you have lost your reputation through standing up for the Truth of God.” “Yes,” I answer, “that is how it used to be done to those who loved God’s name. That is the way His servants have always gone to Glory.” You can go to Hell with a whole skin if you wish to do so, but you must go to Heaven with many a bruise and gash. If you would be faithful to the Lord, you must expect to be despised—but take it all as part of the lot that belongs to you and do not quarrel with it. Do you expect to be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease? I should be sorry to see you trying such a plan of going to Heaven, for that is not how the Lord used to do to those who loved His name! Do you expect to go all the way to Heaven, clapped and applauded by an eager throng, crying, “Well done”? Is that how He used to do unto those who loved His name? Far from it! Therefore, be satisfied if God deals with you as He used to do with those who loved His name.  
I think, also, that when using these words, David meant that He was quite willing that God should deal with him in His usual way, in His regular order. He did not want to have some special railway thrown up for him in which he could ride first-class to Heaven, but he was willing to go the old way, the way the holy Prophets went, and the saints, and martyrs, and confessors of God! That is to say, he did not want salvation without holiness. He did not want justification without sanctification. He did not want pardon without regeneration. He asked God to do with him as He used to do with those who loved His name and, with them, you know, the water and the blood always went together—they had the new heart as well as the new robe. Acceptance in the Beloved did not come without there also being an acceptableness of holy character given by the Spirit of God.  
Next, David did not want profit without exertion. He was not one of those who said, “I want to be happy, but never to do anything. I want to take the promises, but to have no part in Christian service. I want to understand without reading the Scriptures. I want to be taught and comforted without coming to hear sermons—I want to lie down and sleep myself into Glory.” No, He was willing that God should do with him as He used to do unto those who loved Him.  
David did not expect to have answers without prayer. The Lord Jesus said, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” We should be willing to have it as it was done to those who loved the Lord’s name. David said, “Look You upon me and be merciful unto me, as You used to do unto those that love Your name.” Some of our Churches expect prosperity without Prayer Meetings and hope to get many converts without unitedly asking for them. Perhaps half-a-dozen Christians meet for prayer on Monday evenings, or perhaps a few gather on Wednesdays when there is half a lecture and half a Prayer Meeting, so that they can say that they do have a Prayer Meeting when, in reality, they do not have one at all! But David said, “Make me pray, Lord. Do not give me anything unless I pray for it! Compel me to plead with You and then give me Your blessing!”  
Then, again, David did not expect to pass through life without experiencing difficulties. He had to fight Goliath and he had to go into the cave of Adullam. He expected to have troubles and he certainly was not disappointed. Nor will you be. Do not reckon that God will give you a life without difficulty! Tell me, if you can, of any child of His who ever had such a portion? He had one Son without sin, but no son without sorrow. No, that Son who had no sin was the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief—so you must expect the Lord to deal with you as He does with the rest of His household.  
Lastly, you cannot expect that you shall have continual enjoyments of the light of Christ’s Countenance and a blessed experience of the sweets of His love, without having struggle of soul and conflict of spirit which come from the fact that the devil is not dead, that the world is not changed, that sin still dwells within you and still causes you grief. “Deal with me, O Lord, as You used to do with Your children! I do not want to be picked out from the rest and treated as a favorite.” David once had a favorite child, Absalom, and a dreadful fellow he turned out to be! God does not fill us with sweetmeats—it is not His custom to take away all trouble and give us nothing but joy. Sweetmeats at night mean medicine in the morning! God grant us Grace to be willing to take the bitter with the sweet, to be baptized with Christ’s Baptism and to drink of Christ’s cup—and to always be satisfied as long as we may follow where the bleeding Savior leads the way!

Now, dear Friends, I have done. I hope there has been a word for everybody. And if there has been a word from me to you, let there be a word from you to God—and let this be the prayer that you utter before leaving this house, “Look You upon me and be merciful unto me, as You used to do unto those that love Your name.”

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
*PSALM 119:129-144*

Verse 129. Your testimonies are wonderful: therefore does my soul keep them. Every true Believer admires God’s Word and, more than that, it amazes him—“Your testimonies are wonderful.” View them from any point you may select, they are wonderful—wonderful in themselves, wonderful in their operation, wonderful in the way in which they endure all kinds of testing and yet remain the same—“Your testimonies are wonderful.” This wonder, however, in the true Believer, leads to godly practice, to holy living—“Therefore does my soul keep them.” Our soul must be like a golden case in which we store the priceless jewels of the Word of the Lord. You cannot rightly keep God’s Word anywhere but in your soul. To keep it merely in the memory, or in the intellect, is of no avail.

130. The entrance of Your Words give light. The very first principles— the elements of God’s Word—are full of light and no sooner does it come into the heart than there is light, directly. How much more light does it give when it penetrates into the secret chambers of our being and we begin to understand its deeper mysteries!

130. It gives understanding unto the simple. God’s Word gives understanding to those who feel that they have very little mental ability—“the simple.” They are only plain people who must have the Truth of God put very simply before them or else they cannot comprehend it, but as soon as ever God’s Word enters their heart, even such people get understanding. It is not the Word outside the heart that gives the blessing—it is the entrance of the Word that gives true life to the soul!

131. I opened my mouth and panted. That was an admirable way of praying—no words were used by the Psalmist, but his soul expressed itself by panting, “As the hart pants after the water brooks, so pants my soul after You, O God.”

131. For I longed for Your commandments. The very best kind of prayer is that inarticulate panting in which there is a longing, a sighing, that cannot be expressed in words.

132, 133. Look You upon me and be merciful unto me, as You used to do unto those that love Your name. Order my step in Your Word. “Lord, I have found the way into Your Word. That is the road I intend to travel. Now I pray You to guide my every step.” They say that, “Order is Heaven’s first law,” and certainly a Christian should lead an orderly life. He should be a “Methodist”—he should have a method in all that he does—and he should pray for God to order his steps according to His Word.

133. And let not any iniquity have dominion over me. A hypocrite says to himself, “I do not swear, I do not steal and I do not lie, yet I allow other sins to have dominion over me.” But a true man of God will not have any master but the Lord Jesus Christ. He will not put his neck under the foot of even the most attractive sin. “Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.” That is the Psalmist’s prayer. Here is the Apostle’s answer to it— “Sin shall not have dominion over you.”

134. Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep Your precepts. He does not mean that he will not keep God’s precepts if he is not delivered from man’s oppression, but there are persons in such circumstances—Christian wives with wicked husbands, godly servants with ungodly masters, Believers who are greatly oppressed by evil men—and they desire to be delivered from the oppression of man that they may be the better able to keep God’s commandments.

135. Make Your face to shine upon Your servant. What a blessed prayer that is! Let each one, here, pray it tonight—“Make Your face to shine upon Your servant.” The Lord is our Sun! He is the very Sun of Heaven—they need no sun, there, because they see His face!

135. And teach me Your statutes. The Lord’s servant ought to know the Law of his Lord’s house. How can he be an obedient servant if he does not know his Master’s will? So the Psalmist prays, “Lord, I will take it as a favor if You will teach me Your statutes, that I may not only know, but also do them!”

136. Rivers of waters run down my eyes because they keep not Your Law. Some think that the Psalmist meant that his eyes wept because they, that is, his eyes did not keep God’s Law. You know how easily sin comes in through the eyes and goes out through the eyes, too. Well may those eyes weep in sorrow that have lusted towards sin. But I think the Psalmist alludes, here, to the ungodly. The sins of sinners are the sorrows of saints. “Rivers of waters run down my eyes because they keep not Your Law.” Perhaps David referred to his own children, or he may have meant his soldiers—those rough, rugged warriors who were led by Joab. He met with many in his own country who turned aside from God and he wept over them. It is a blessed sign of Grace when you can weep over other men’s sins. Do not say, “So-and-So has gone wrong,” and treat the matter with indifference. If you can do so, you may question whether you have Grace in your own heart, for a true Christian ought to be tender and compassionate at the thought of the sinful things around him. There are some who can look upon the error and false doctrine which abound everywhere and say, “Oh, let it alone! Do not trouble yourself about that.” But he who walks with God is not of their mind—it is a constant grief and agony of spirit to him that men keep not God’s Law.

137. Righteous are You, O LORD, and upright are Your judgements. It is always well to set God in contrast with wicked men. If others are unjust, He is not. If they forsake the Truth of God, He does not.

138. Your testimonies that You have commanded are righteous and very faithful. True to the letter, true always, true to the core.  
139. Your zeal has consumed me, because my enemies have forgotten Your Words. Yes, God’s faithful servants become the more zealous when others grow cold. When they see that God’s Words are forgotten by others, they remember them all the more and they grow exceedingly zealous for the Law of the Lord.

140. Your Word is very pure: therefore Your servant loves it. It is pure in the sense of being unadulterated and it is pure in the sense of being holy. There is nothing in the Scripture that would lead us to sin, nor excuse it—it is a wonderful condemner of sin. “Your Word is very pure.” Notice the Psalmist’s use of the word, “very.” In the 138th verse, he says, “Your testimonies are very faithful.” And now, in the 140th, “Your Word is very pure.” “Therefore Your servant loves it.” When purity draws out our love, it proves that our heart, itself, loves that which is pure—and the heart that loves purity is a pure heart.

141. I am small and despised: yet I do not forget Your precepts. He was poor but pious, little but loving, despised but devoted. It was the man who had but one talent who went and dug in the earth and hid his Lord’s money. David was not of that kind. He was small, but he knew he was not too small to sin. He was despised, but he did not, on that account, think that he might turn aside from the right path.

142. Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness. God’s Word does not change, it is everlasting, and the righteousness which it reveals and which it proclaims to us is everlasting.

142. And Your Law is the Truth. God’s Word is not only true, but it is “the Truth.” The Truth is God’s Law and God’s Law is the Truth.  
143. Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me. Just now he said that he was despised and now he says he is unhappy. Trouble without and anguish within seemed to grip him as in a vice.  
143. Yet Your commandments are my delights. A man of the world cannot understand how a Christian can be in trouble and yet be full of delight, but it is true. We can be cast down, but not destroyed. We can be sorrowful, yet always rejoicing. We can be poor, yet make many rich. Here you have another holy paradox—“Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me, yet Your commandments are my delights”—not only his delight, but his delights! As if he had a whole host of them—a great company of joys, and a chorus of holy mirth!  
144. The righteousness of Your testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding. That is a great prayer, not only, “give me to understand,” but, “give me understanding.” It is one thing to tell a man the Truth of God, but quite another thing to make him understand it. And if you make him understand a particular Truth, he may not understand another, but David asks for understanding with which he might be able to comprehend all the Truths of God—“Give me understanding”—  
144. And I shall live. God grant that this prayer may be offered by each one of us and heard by the Lord, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—779, 773, 791. Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #2487 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

ORDERED STEPS  
NO. 2487

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, OCTOBER 18, 1896.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 29, 1886.

**“Order my steps in Your Word: and let not any  
iniquity have dominion over me.”  
Psalm 119:133.**

NOTICE, in the previous verse, how the Psalmist expresses his longing desire to be treated as one of the Lord’s family—“Look upon me, and be merciful to me, as You used to do to those that love Your name.” We, also, dear Friends, wish to be treated as God treats all the rest of His children. I am sure that every humble Believer will be quite content with that arrangement. There was a time when you would have been willing that He should make you one of His hired servants, but you have seen the mistake of such a desire as that and now your prayer is, “Deal with me, O Lord, as one of Your children; treat me according to Your custom with Your redeemed! I do not ask anything different from the lot of the rest of the heirs of Heaven. If they are poor, I would be poor with them. If they suffer reproach, I would be reproached with them. If they carry a cross, I would carry a cross, too. Whatever is the appointed portion of the Lord’s children, I am prepared to share and share alike with them. If You chasten them, I hope to have Your chastening. If You smile upon them, I shall delight to be smiled upon as You are known to smile on them.” Brothers and Sisters, we feel a sweet kind of communism in the Church of God— we, none of us, desire to have anything more than this common lot of the redeemed family.

At the same time, each Believer must have and will have his own apprehension of his personal needs and he will, therefore, present to the Lord his own special prayer. I hoped, just now, when we were praying, that my words might suit the cases of many of you, but I felt more concerned that each one should be offering petitions and the thanksgivings for himself. Oh, what power there often is in those personal prayers where there is no audible voice, but only the lips move, as did Hannah’s! At such times the woman of a sorrowful spirit goes her way comforted because of her secret fellowship with God. Do not imagine that any form of prayer—liturgical or extempore—can meet the needs of your case at all times. No, you must present your own personal supplication, and the Lord seems to say to you, as Ahasuerus said to Esther, “What is your petition, and it shall be granted you. And what is your request...it shall be performed.”  
It seems to me that my text may suit all of us who are in this assembly. I am sure that it suits me. I have prayed it before I have preached from it and I desire to be praying it while I am preaching concerning it. I commend it to those who are just beginning the Divine Life and I suggest it as equally appropriate to those who may have wandered somewhat out of the way of holiness. Yes, and I suggest it to those who are venerable and full of wisdom. I suggest it even to my elders, to the beloved fathers in our Israel, that this is a prayer which may last all of us right up to the gates of Heaven! “Order my steps in Your Word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.” You, too, who are just beginning to seek the Savior, should be told that this is the kind of spirit to which you will have to come—and if the Lord brings you to be His own, this is the kind of prayer that you will pray. And if you cannot pray it and will not pray it, you will bear witness against yourselves that you are not the children of God. I am sure that I am not too severe when I say that.

I. As the Holy Spirit shall enable me, I want to bring out four things in this text which are well worthy of your earnest consideration. The first is the COMPLETE SUBSERVIENCE to the will of God of the man who thus prayed, “Order my steps in Your Word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.”

You see, he begins his prayer with the word, “ order.” He is a man who wishes to be under orders. He is willing to obey the Lord’s commands and he is anxious to receive them and to be made to carry them out. Now this is not the way of the world—worldlings say, “Who is the Lord, that we should obey His voice? We are our own masters! Who is Lord over us?” Free thinking and free living—these are the desires of ungodly men. But when the Grace of God has renewed the heart, the soul finds its true freedom in obedience to Christ’s commands, and its best thinking while sitting at the feet of Jesus to observe His gracious Words.

“Order my steps in Your Word.” Beloved, once we lived without any order or plan, or method, but the Grace of God makes us method-ists in the highest possible sense. It makes us live according to God’s method— and our prayer is that we may never be disorderly, but that in all things, just as the universe is arranged by God, and all the stars keep their appointed courses, so we may be made to take our proper places, and may be kept in them—joyfully obedient to the will of the Most High! It is one of the marks of the Grace of God when we ask God to order us and willingly put ourselves under His command.

Moreover, the Psalmist prayed, “Order my steps in Your Word.” He was perfectly satisfied with God’s Revelation. He had not so much of it as we have but there was room enough in it for all his steps. “Order my steps in Your Word.” He needed no greater liberty than the Bible gave him, no wider range than he found in the commands of the Most High. His prayer was like that verse we sang just now—

*“Make me to walk in Your commands,  
‘Tis a delightful road.  
Nor let my head, or heart, or hands,  
Offend against my God.”*

Are you satisfied, dear Hearer, to keep within the compass of the Divine command? If so, take it as an evidence that God has changed your heart! But oh, my dear Hearer, if you live outside of that Book. If you never get inside it at all. If you never care what it says, what it promises, what it commands—then take it as certain that you do not know the Lord! Let us, each one, at this moment breathe this prayer to God, “Order my steps in Your Word. Make me to live as a man who is under authority— one who finds directions for his living in the Law of his God, and who makes it his desire and his delight to be conformed thereto.”

So you see the complete subservience of the man of God—his earnest desire that he might be cleared from every kind of iniquity. I may mention that in the Hebrew, the prayer, “Order my steps in Your Word,” may mean, “Make my steps firm in Your Word.” The Psalmist would be kept from all vacillation, hesitation, or wandering, but he wants, when he is right, to be firmly right, to be distinctly, decidedly right, so he pleads, “Make my steps firm.” Oh, how we often stagger along! We do what is right, but we quiver and shake while we are doing it! Have you not known, dear Friends, what it was to seem to be wavering? Your feet had almost gone, your steps had well-near slipped. But the Psalmist’s prayer is that his obedience may be firm, decided, steady obedience. You young beginners will do well to pray that this experience may be yours. It is often given to God’s saints, when they have been long in His ways, to get confirmed in habit of righteousness so that they are not carried about by every wind of temptation. And it should be the prayer of all God’s servants that they may be so established in righteousness that they can say with the Apostle Paul, “From henceforth let no man trouble me.” It is no use for them to try it, for they cannot entice me away from my dear Master’s service. “I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.” I bared my back to be branded as Christ’s slave so that the mark shall never be removed as long as I live! I have given my arm to be tattooed with the Cross, so that never, while I have an arm to move, should it belong to anybody but to Christ Himself!

It is a blessed thing when you reach this point and say, “I cannot and I will not listen to your temptations, O sinful world! You may call, but I will not answer. You may invite, but I will not listen. The time of parleying is past, the hour for making my choice is over. I belong to God and my prayer is that my footsteps may always be confirmed in obedience to His mind and will.”

I leave this prayer with you as to its complete subservience. Do you kick against it? Do you want to be something other than God would have you to be? My dear Hearer, I am sorry for you! But if, on the other hand, you yield to Him and desire to be like wax under the seal, that God may stamp upon you His own Image—and no other then the Lord is dealing with you in a way of Grace—then you may confidently hope that you belong to Him.

II. Now, secondly, I call your attention to the CAREFUL WATCHFULNESS of this prayer, the detailed watchfulness of it—“Order my steps in Your Word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.”

You see that the Psalmist enters into detail when he presents this petition. He does not say merely, “Order my life,” but, “Order my steps.” Godly men desire to be kept right by God even in the little things of life. It is often in little things, such as steps, rather than in long periods of running, that the good or the evil may be most plainly seen. Blessed is that man to whom there exists no such thing as a trifle, who desires to serve God even in the jots and tittles, for he shall not fall by little and little, as so many have done. He shall not have gray hairs upon him here and there, and yet not know it, for his careful watchfulness shall enable him to detect the slightest defection from the right way and so shall he be able to hold to the straight path of integrity. Brothers and Sisters, the old proverb is, “Take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves,” which I will translate into the language of our text, “Take care of the steps, and the day’s walking, as a whole, will take care of itself.” True Christians want the Lord to bless them in everything, yes, even in those plain and simple words which drop from their lips almost without a thought. We do more wrong, perhaps, by lack of thought than by any will to do evil and, therefore, the necessity of crying to God, “Order my steps; take care of the little things in my life, that I sin not against You.”

“Order my steps.” That prayer means, “Order my ordinary daily life.” Do not many think that religion is only something for Sundays? They put it on with their best hat and put it away when they put that hat back into the box. Believe me, that the religion which is taken up only once a week and dropped during the rest of the week is neither fit to live with nor to die with! It is like a bad bank-note—if you find such a counterfeit, you had better lay it down and run away from it—and not let anyone suspect that it ever belonged to you!

True godliness concerns the ordinary actions of daily life. Do not tell me what you can say at a Prayer Meeting. What do you do in the parlor? What do you do in the kitchen? How do you behave yourself towards your wife? How do you act towards your children? “He is a very good man,” said one to me, “he is a very good man, indeed, but his children are all afraid of him.” “Then,” I thought, “he is not a good man, but a very bad man, indeed.” I could not conceive him to be good—I would rather believe Rowland Hill’s saying that a man was not truly converted if his cat and his dog were not the better off for it! It ought to be a blessing and it must be a blessing to everybody round about him if the Grace of God enters into his soul. “Order my steps in Your Word,” means, “Help me to turn the common actions of my ordinary life into a hallowed service.” When I put on my weekday clothes, may I be even as when a priest in the olden times put on his holy vestments and ministered before the Lord. And may everything that I do be the exercise of a sacred priesthood to the living God. The Apostle Peter’s exhortation is still in force, “As He which has called you is holy, so be you holy in all manner of conversation.” So are Paul’s injunctions, “Whether, therefore, you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.”

Thus the watchfulness included in the text concerns the little things and the ordinary things of our lives. And following the Psalmist’s example, we shall especially pray about all our advances. It is by steps that we go forward. This is the age of progress—everybody is crying out, “Forward!” Well, then, here is a prayer for those who wish to progress wisely. “O Lord, order my steps in Your Word! So shall my progress be a progress toward Yourself, a progress within the compass of Your sacred Truth.” He who outruns Scripture will have to come back again. He who goes beyond the boundaries of the right road will lose his way and the more progress he makes the greater will be the distance that he will have to return if he is to reach his journey’s end in peace. Pray this prayer, young man, if you want to be safe, “O Lord, order my steps in Your Word!”

There is great temptation, nowadays, to take up with anything that is new. A man buttonholes you and tells you of a new discovery that he has made. Well, hear what he has to say if you think well. “Prove all things,” but, “hold fast that which is good.” And be this your continual prayer, that your steps, when you take any steps, may always be ordered according to the Word of God. “Well,” says one, “you tie us up pretty tightly.” No, my Friend, I do not want to tie you up at all! You can roam where you like, but I know that the tighter I am tied, the better it is for me, and the happier I am. There is a prayer in the 118th Psalm which I always like to pray, “Bind the sacrifice with cords, even to the horns of the altar.” Lord, hold me fast from morning till night, and through the night as well! I long that You should fill my very dreams with thoughts of You! Lord, bind me fast, both winter and summer, and every day in the year! I would not have a single hour in which You did not order me and command me! Lord, bind me as to every step I take, and every advance I make, for where may I not go if I ever advance beyond Your Word? And what can be good for me if You do not count it good, and what will You withhold from me if it is really good for me?

So I commend this prayer to you, dwelling much on these two points— first, complete subservience to the Divine will, and then careful watchfulness about all the details of your life. Only turn them both into prayers! Do not say, “I am going to order my steps.” Are you? Do not say, “I am going to obey God in everything.” Are you? This holy road is not fit for such feet as yours while you talk like that! Until you are shod with a simple dependence upon God you will never take to this narrow way. And unless the Lord holds you up in it, you will soon either fall in it or fall from it. So make no resolutions in your own strength, but offer the prayer of our text in the name of Jesus—and the Lord will hear you.

III. In the third place, I call your attention to the COMPREHENSIVE OBEDIENCE which is desired in this text.  
It has two clauses, the positive and the negative. “Order my steps in Your Word.” That is, “Lord, make me positively to do the right thing!” Then, “Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.” That is, “Lord, preserve me from any thought or word or deed which would be contrary to your mind and will!” He is the right sort of Believer who is an all-round Christian, one who is positive for doing right, but who is equally determined not to do wrong. We have some very active professors who are not, at the same time, watchful on the negative side. And we have a great many negative professors who might offer the Pharisee’s prayer, “God, I thank You that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.” They look to some extent to the negative side, but then there is nothing positive for the right, there is nothing that they are really doing to please the Lord. We need to have a Divine amalgam of the two parts of our text, “Order my steps in Your Word” and, “Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.”  
With regard to this comprehensive obedience, notice that the Psalmist desires that no sin of any kind should be tolerated within his heart—“Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.” Some men have their pet sins and some women have their darling sins. They cry to the evil things within, “Out with you, out with you all, except this one.” There is a winking of the eye, or a lifting of the finger which means to some iniquity, “You may stay behind.” “But, my dear Sir,” says one, “have we not all some besetting sin?” Possibly it is so, but what is a besetting sin? If I were to go across a common at dead of night and half-a-dozen men met me and gathered round me, crying, “Your money or your life!” I should be beset by them. Suppose that I had to cross Clapham Common tonight and that I was thus surrounded and robbed—I should be beset by the thieves.  
But suppose I went that way again tomorrow night? And on Tuesday night, and on Wednesday night, and Thursday night, and Friday night, and Saturday night? Do you think that I should be able to say that I was “beset” by the robbers? People would naturally ask, “Why did you go that way? If you are attacked and robbed once, we can understand that, but what do you mean by going that way again?” Here is a man who says that drinking is his besetting sin. Well, my Brother, I can understand that you were led on, by degrees, from glass to glass till you lost your balance and were overcome. You call that your besetting sin and yet you still go to the public-house! Well, that is what I call going across a common on purpose to be robbed! And I do not believe your excuse about besetting sins.  
I think that I have heard many things of that character, whereby people try to excuse themselves on the ground that some sin besets them. The Black man said that drunkenness was an “upsetting” sin much more than a “besetting” sin. I think he was quite right in saying so, and there are many other upsetting sins of that kind! Men open the door and say to some iniquity or other, “Come in, you are my besetting sin.” They put themselves in the way of it! They indulge themselves in it and then they talk as if they could not help it! Down on your knees and cry, “Let not any iniquity have dominion over me. Lord, save me from it, for my desire is to obey You completely in everything without leaving anything out from under the dominion and sway of the Laws of Christ!”  
IV. Now, lastly, this prayer commends itself very much to me, not only for its comprehensiveness, but because of a certain CAUTIOUS APPREHENSIVENESS which seems to lie in it.  
I like the holy fear which glows within the Psalmist’s prayer like the fire within an opal. He says, “Order my steps in Your Word.” He means, “Lord, I am afraid to take a single step without Your orders. I am afraid to put one foot before another for fear I should go wrong!” “Happy is the man that always fears.” He that was too bold was never too wise. He that leaped before he looked, looked very sadly after he had leaped. He shall go right who knows where he is going, is careful about the road and afraid lest he should go astray. He is the man who prays, “Order my steps in Your Word.”  
Then notice, especially in the latter sentence, “Let not any iniquity have dominion over me,” how the Psalmist seems to say, “Lord, I feel that I am liable to the very greatest iniquity. Let not any iniquity have dominion over me!” Is this David praying? I think it was the man after God’s own heart who wrote this Psalm—and he proved in his life that the very worst iniquities might assail him and that he might become their prey for a time. O child of God, you must pray against the blackest sin! You do not know what you may yet become if the Grace of God does not preserve you. I am always afraid of people who are so very good in their own esteem—superfine, hot-pressed perfectionism is generally very poor stuff. I had an old friend who was very cautious upon this point. He was met, one day, by a man who had been many years the deacon of a church and who said to him, “Friend So-and-So, I want you to lend me 50 pounds.” He knew him right well and he was quite prepared to write a check for the amount at once but the venerable deacon said, “You know you can trust me. I am not a man of yesterday, I am not like young people who are easily led astray to do foolish and wicked things. I am perfectly safe.”  
My wise old friend then said, “I cannot lend you any money.” The other man asked, “Why not?” “I never lend money to people who are so good as you are, for I should never see it again if I did.” That man was head over heels in debt and failed, soon after, for an enormous amount! Yet there he stood, as bold as brass, pleading what a good man he was! So the man who says that he cannot sin and that he is beyond the power of temptation—well, the Lord have mercy upon him! He is already in the snare of the devil and it may not be long before he will have sorrowfully to find it out. No, Sir, pray, “Let not any iniquity have dominion over me,” for, unless you are kept by God’s Grace, there is no form of iniquity which may not prevail against you! The Psalmist feels himself liable to fall into the greatest transgression, so he prays, “Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.”  
But the prayer seems to me, also, to intimate that he felt fearful of the least evil. There is here, to my mind, a very sweet apprehensiveness concerning little sins, if there are such things. “Let not any iniquity have dominion over me. Perhaps, Lord, I shall never be a drunkard, for You have given me reason, thought and the love of sobriety, but then, Lord, what use is it if I should be guilty of covetousness, which is idolatry? Let not that iniquity have dominion over me. And if I should escape from covetousness, perhaps I may fall prey to some secret lust. Lord, if there is a leak in the ship, the ship will go down. Even if there is not a leak in the stern of the vessel, yet if there is a leak in the prow, or anywhere in her hull, that will suffice to sink her. Lord, let not

 any iniquity have dominion over me!” Suppose that I do not fall by any of these known sins, yet if I do not walk with God, if I neglect secret prayer, if I have not yielded myself fully up to the working of the Holy Spirit upon me, the result will be the same! This prayer is necessary for every one of us—“Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.”  
Brothers and Sisters, I am not afraid for the most of you, that you will become the prey of any overt scandalous sins, but I am afraid that some of you may be eaten up with dry rot—that the termites may secretly eat through you and yet leave all the skin and outside of everything just as it used to be. We have heard travelers tell that when they have gone into their rooms which they had left for some time, there stood their boxes, their sets of drawers, and their tables, just as when they left—but as soon as they have touched them, they have dropped into so much dust— for the insects had eaten all the heart of the wood away! Is it not possible for us to get into that state—to seem everything that is good, and yet the very heart of us may be eaten out? Pray, then, this prayer, “Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.”  
O children of God, you who really know and love Him, be concerned about yourselves that you be not mistaken and that you do not fall under the supremacy of any evil and false thing! Cry mightily to God about this matter! Search and try yourselves and make sure work for eternity. I say this especially to myself and to all ministers, for there are so many ways in which ministers may deceive themselves. We may preach to others and yet be, ourselves, castaways. I say this, also, to you Church officers and to you revered members of the Church who have grown gray in your profession. Take heed to yourselves and everyone of you breathe this prayer, “Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.”  
Then what shall I say to you who have never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ? If the righteous are scarcely saved, where will you be found? “Oh!” says one, “I never made a profession of religion.” You are proud of that, are you? Suppose you were brought before a magistrate and charged with being a thief and you said to him, “I never made a profession of being an honest man.” “Oh!” he would say, “take that fellow to prison! He is convicted out of his own mouth.” You never made a profession of fearing God? You never made a profession of believing in Christ— is that so, Sir? Then the Day of Judgment is almost a superfluity to you, for you have judged yourself and condemned yourself! And before long my Lord’s sheriff will lay his skeleton hand upon you and arrest you in the name of that Divine Justice which you have despised! There will be no resisting him and you will have to go with him to prison and to death.  
Before that dread event happens, I entreat you, by the very reasonableness of the thing, to consider, repent and turn to the Lord! Look to Jesus Christ upon the Cross, for He is the only way of salvation! Find in Him the power to hate sin and the power to conquer it, for there is no power anywhere but that which comes from His dear streaming wounds and from His ever-living Spirit. Look to Him—and when you have done so and have trusted Him—then pray this prayer to the Lord, “Order my steps in Your Word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.”

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**PSALM 119:129-144; MATTHEW 15:1-13.**

Psalm 119:129. Your testimonies are wonderful: therefore does my soul keep them. It is very wonderful that God should speak to us at all, but still more marvelous that He should write to us such a book as this Bible. The Book itself is full of wonders and one of those wonders is that it reveals Him whose name is “Wonderful.” Observe that the Psalmist, having said to the Lord, “Your testimonies are wonderful,” does not add, “Therefore do I sit down and wonder at them.” No, his appreciation was practical, let ours be the same—“Your testimonies are wonderful: therefore does my soul keep them.”

130. The entrance of Your Words gives light. Those who are most ignorant and have least confidence in their own abilities will, nevertheless, become very wise if they study God’s Word.

130-131. It gives understanding to the simple. I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for Your commandments. What a wonderful verse that is! The Psalmist cannot describe his longing for God’s commandments except by going to the brute creation for a suitable metaphor! He had probably seen the hunted stag stand still and pant to get its breath, all the while longing for the water brooks. So he says, “I opened my mouth, and panted.” “I could not put my prayer into words, so I panted. My heart, my breath, my lungs, my very soul panted, for I longed for Your commandments.”

132. Look upon me—That is all the Psalmist needs and all that we need, too. If a look from us to God will save us, what must a look from God to us do for us? “Look upon me”—

132-134. And be merciful to me, as You used to do to those that love Your name. Order my steps in Your Word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me. Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep Your precepts. Some of you, perhaps, may hardly be able to do as you would if you were perfectly free to act, for you are, to a certain extent, under the government and power of ungodly persons. Well, here is a prayer for you to present to the Lord. “Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep Your precepts.”

135 *.*Make Your face to shine upon Your servant. That is the best sunshine for us! Let us but have the light of God’s Countenance and nothing can put us out of countenance! If the Lord will smile, men may frown as much as they please. So we pray with the Psalmist, “Make Your face to shine upon Your servant.”

135-136. And teach me Your statues. Rivers of waters run down my eyes because they keep not Your Law. The Psalmist felt for others as well as for himself. It was not enough for him to be holy—he would have others to be the same. Sin in other men brought sorrow to his heart. “Rivers of waters run down my eyes, because they keep not Your Law.”

137. Righteous are You, O LORD, and upright are Your judgments. After having wept over the sin of men, the Psalmist turns with sweet calmness of spirit to the goodness of God.

138. Your testimonies that You have commanded are righteous and very faithful. “Very faithful.” You who have tried and proven God’s promises must have found them so—not only faithful, but very faithful, faithful to the letter, faithful to the moment. God seems rather to exceed His promise than ever to fall short of it.

139-140. My zeal has consumed me, because my enemies have forgotten Your Words. Your Word is very pure.—Just now the Psalmist said, “Your testimonies are very faithful. Now he says, “Your Word is very pure.” There is no adulteration in this blessed Book—it is the pure Truth of God. You cannot add to it or take from it without making it imperfect! “Your Word is very pure.”—

140. Therefore Your servant loves it. It is only a pure heart that loves the pure Word of the Lord! So, if you love the Word of God because of its purity, it is an argument that your heart has been renewed by Grace!

141. I am small and despised: yet I do not forget Your precepts. In verse 139, the Psalmist complained that his enemies had forgotten God’s Words. He does not complain of the fault in others and then fall into it, himself, but he says, “Yet I do not forget Your percepts.” There are some people who seem to think that it does not much matter what they do. If they were persons of influence, they think that they would be very careful of their example. “But,” says one, “I am only a feeble woman—a poor mother with a few children.” “Oh,” exclaims another, “I am only a child as yet, I cannot influence others!” “Oh,” cries a third, “I am simply an ordinary working man, nobody notices me.” Listen to what the Psalmist says, “I am small and despised: yet I do not forget Your precepts. I do not make an excuse out of my littleness, that I may be careless in my living.” Take that message home, dear Friends, and learn its lesson, for it applies to many of you!

142. Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness—What a wonderful sentence! Just now, the Psalmist said, “Your testimonies that You have commanded are righteousness.” (See the marginal reading of verse 138). Now he advances another step and says, “Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness.”

142. And Your Law is the truth. That is what I believe this Book of God is—“the truth.” I know of nothing Infallible but the Bible. Every man must have a fixed point somewhere—some believe in an infallible pope, and some in an infallible church, but I believe in an Infallible Book, expounded by the Infallible Spirit who is ready to guide us into all truth— “Your Law is the truth.”

143. Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me: yet Your commandments are my delight. What a curious mixture this verse describes! Here is a man full of trouble and anguish, and yet full of delight at the same time! Little do they understand human nature and especially gracious human nature, who cannot comprehend this paradox. There are many seemingly contradictions in the Christian life and this is one of them. “Trouble and anguish have taken hold of me”—as dogs lay hold of their prey—“yet Your commandments are my delights.” The Apostle Paul pictured another such a case as this when he wrote, “We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed. We are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.” And he also described the Christian paradox, “As unknown, and yet well known, as dying and, behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.” May we all understand these paradoxes in our own experiences!

144. The righteousness of Your testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live. Now let us read what the Lord Jesus said to those who professed to reverence the Scripture, but who really made it void by their traditions.

Matthew 15:1. Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying.—They had taken a journey to come and attack Him. Perhaps they had been sent as a deputation to try to thwart the Savior. What a vexation of spirit it must have been to His pure and holy mind to come into conflict with these triflers, these self-righteous, selfconfident men! Why did they some to Christ? To plead with Him for the poor people who were perishing for lack of knowledge, or to ask Him how souls could be saved and how God could be glorified? Oh, no! They came to ask the Savior about a very different subject—

2. Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread. Would you have thought that full-grown men could have made it a matter of business to come from Jerusalem down into the country to talk to Christ about the fact that His disciples did not always wash their hands before they ate their breakfasts? Yet we have men, nowadays, who make a great point of what is to be done with the so-called “consecrated” bread that is left, and who are much concerned about what kind of a dress a “priest” ought to wear when he is engaged in the performance of certain duties! How sad is it that such trifles as these should occupy the minds of immortal beings while men are dying and God is dishonored!

3. But He answered and said to them, Why do you, also, transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? He answered their question by asking another, in which he drew the contrast between transgressing the tradition of the elders and transgressing the commandment of God!

4-6. 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 honors not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have you made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. Whatever might be said about regarding the tradition of men, God’s commandment must be regarded! That stands first and, therefore, our Lord demanded of these scribes and Pharisee an answer to His charge that they had overridden and overlaid a commandment of God by a tradition of their own. If a father and mother, in great need, said to their son, “Help us, for we need bread,” and he answered, “I cannot give you anything, for all I have is dedicated to God,” the Rabbis taught that he might be exempted from relieving his parents, although they also said that the next day he might undo the dedication of his property and employ it exactly as he pleased. He might use the fact that he had said, “That shekel is for God,” as a reason for not giving it to his father who was in need—and then, the very next day—he might take that shekel and spend it exactly as he chose. So God’s commandment to honor, and love, and aid our parents was set aside by their tradition.

7-9. You hypocrites! Well did Elijah prophesy of you, saying, This people draws near to Me with their mouth, and honors Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. Our Lord never flattered anybody! See how honestly and in what plain terms He addressed these scribes and Pharisees! Yet these were the great teachers of His day and thought themselves the bright light of the age, the very leaders of the people in all that was good! But Christ addressed them as, “You hypocrites,” and gave them a text of Scripture which clearly applied to them. They had all manner of outward forms of worship. They talked very much about the Bible—they studied every Word of it and even counted the letters in every chapter—but they had no regard to the real meaning of God’s Word! And their heart was not right with the Lord. The Savior patiently talked with them, but He also sternly rebuked them and denounced them as hypocrites.

10. And He called the multitude. As much as if He had said to the scribes and Pharisees, “I cannot waste My time arguing with you. I am going to talk to these poor people who are perishing and I shall have more hope of doing good among the multitude than among you, though you consider yourselves the aristocracy of the church.”

10, 11. And said to 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. This was not very clear at first, it needed to be thought over and well considered. The Savior dropped it into the popular mind, like a seed, and left it to grow and develop in due season.

12. Then came His disciples, and said to him, Do You know that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? The wonder was that they were not offended before! It certainly was not a matter of concern to Christ whether they were offended or not—He would not tone down the Truth of God in order to please them.

13. But He answered and said, Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up. Every teacher whom God has not sent will find his teaching contradicted by Christ. The Truth of God is like a spade—it turns up the soil for that life to grow in it which should grow— and it is also the means of killing the weeds. “Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted shall be rooted up.” May we all be plants of His right-hand planting! Amen.

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A WELL-ORDERED LIFE  
NO. 878

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 27, 1869, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Order my steps in Your Word and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.” Psalm 119:133.**

This is not the prayer of an unconverted man, or the cry of an awakened sinner foolishly expecting to find salvation in good works. It is the prayer of one who is saved and who knows it. The verse preceding the text shows this, for he asks to be mercifully dealt with as the Lord is accustomed to do unto those that love His name. He therefore is confident that he is one of those—that he is a partaker of Divine favor—and has the evidence of this in his love to the name of the Lord. Now, those persons who are truly saved are among the very loudest to cry out against anything like confidence in good works—you shall hear them denounce with all their hearts self-righteousness in every shape. You shall hear them preach up with might and main the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ as the only confidence upon which a soul may rest—and yet at the same time these people are, of all others in the world, the most zealous for good works and the most earnest, themselves, to be holy and in the fear of God to adorn the doctrine of God their Savior in all things.

David was no professor of salvation by his own merits. He had been led by Divine Grace to trust in the sprinkling of the precious blood and to glory in another righteousness than his own. And yet he is indefatigable in prayer and in earnest endeavors to be purified from all faults of life and to be made in practical holiness the faithful servant of God. The prayer before us is the sighing of a saved soul after a higher state of sanctification— it is the panting of a spirit already reconciled to God, to be more perfectly conformed unto the Lord’s mind and will.

Let us carefully note each word of the text. “ Order,” says David, or as some read, “direct,” “set straight,” “appoint,” “firmly establish,” or, “rightly frame my steps.” David, looking abroad upon nature, saw order ruling everywhere in Heaven above and on the earth beneath and even among the fowl of the air and the fish of the sea. He desired, therefore, to fall into rank and keep the harmony of the universe. He was not afraid of being laughed at for living by method and rule, for he saw method and rule to be Divine institutions. He did not aspire to a random life, or envy the freelivers, whose motto is, “Do whatever you like.”

He had no lusts to be his own master—he wished in all things to be governed by the superior and all-perfect will of God. In the text, King David bows in homage to the King of kings—he enlists in the army of the Lord of Hosts and asks for marching orders and Grace to obey them. Note the next word, “My steps.” He is anxious as to details. David does not say, “Order the whole of my pilgrimage.” He may mean that, but his expression is more expressive and painstaking—he would have each single step ordered in holiness—he would enjoy heavenly guidance in each minute portion of his journey towards Heaven.

Much of the beauty of holiness lies in little things. Microscopic holiness is the perfection of excellence—if a life will bear examination in each hour of it, it is pure, indeed. Those who are not careful about their words and even their thoughts, will soon grow careless concerning their more notable actions. Those who tolerate sin in what they think to be little things, will soon indulge in it in greater maters. To live by the day and to watch each step is the true pilgrimage method. More lies in the careful noting of every single act than careless minds can well imagine. Be this, then, your prayer—“Lord, direct my morning thoughts, that the step out of my chamber into the world may be taken in Your fear. At my table keep me in Your Presence. Behind my counter, or in my field, or wherever else I may be, suffer me not to grieve Your Spirit by any evil.

“And when I come to lie down at night, let the action (which seems so indifferent) of casting myself upon my pillow be performed with a heart that loves You, so that I shall be prepared to be with You, if wakeful during the night.” This brief prayer, “Order my steps,” teaches us attention to the minutiae of life—may we have Divine Grace to learn the lesson. “Order my steps

 in Your Word.” Notice the expression—not by Your Word, nor according to Your Word. The sentence means that, but it means far more. The Psalmist evidently looks upon the Word of God as being the very path of his life and he prays that he may walk within the lines which God’s Word has marked out—may always keep within the sacred enclosures which the commands of God have made for the king’s highway.

He does not pray, “order my footsteps by Your Word,” as though it were a law hanging up upon the column in the marketplace, to be read and studied and then left hanging in its place—but in Your Word, as though it were engraved in his heart and then encompassed all his ways, thoughts and being. The word is the road of our marching, the sea of our sailing, the pasture of our feeding, the home of our resting. Lord, never allow us to have a step out of it, nor a disorderly step in it.

“And let not any iniquity have dominion over me,” adds the Psalmist. He frequently adds a negative petition to his positive prayers, as if to complete them. The second expression is weaker than the first and is pitched upon a lower key, as if the suppliant would say, “If, O Lord, my steps cannot be so ordered in Your Word as to be altogether without sin, yet let not any iniquity gain the mastery of my spirit. Even in the aberrations of my soul, let it still be, in the main, true to You. If sin assails me, at least let it not enslave me. If for awhile I stray, yet let me be reckoned as still Your own sheep and not one of the flock of Satan. O my Lord, suffer no iniquity to sit down on the throne of my heart and make me its serf and vassal. If I slip into the mire let it be but a slip and do not suffer me to wallow in it.”

Thus I have opened up the words one by one, and now, leaving out the last sentence, as we shall not have time to consider it this morning, I shall ask you to give me your earnest attention while we speak upon the solemnly practical topic of sanctification. First, we shall consider the order of a holy life. Secondly, the rule of holiness by which that order is arranged, “Order my steps in Your Word.” And thirdly, the great Director of that order—the Lord Himself. When we have spoken upon these points, we shall conclude with a few practical words and may the Holy Spirit graciously bless them to us.

I. A holy life is no work of chance, it is a masterpiece of ORDER. David prays that his steps may be ordered. Holiness rejoices in symmetry, harmony, proportion, order. If we consider at the outset the order of holiness to be that of conformity to the prescribed rule, we have that rule given us in living characters in the Incarnate Word. The law, not in the hand of Moses, but in the hand and life of the Redeemer, is the rule of life to a Christian man. It behooves us that every single action of life should be, if judged by itself and examined by the all-seeing God, an upright action— an action conformed into the perfect holiness of the Lord’s Christ.

Alas, I fear there are many professors who do not hesitate to perform hundreds of actions without so much as once pausing to use the plumbline of Christ’s example to see whether those actions are upright. But a tender conscience, a heart that has been really quickened by the Holy Spirit, will often pause and after each distinct act will say, “O Lord, my God, I pray You forgive Your servant if my words have not been ordered according to Your will. Help me, now, in the next step that I am about to take, that I may proceed according to Your mind.” Every step a man takes in life, remember, is a step towards Heaven or Hell. We serve God or the devil in all that we do.

No action of a man’s life is unimportant. The pilgrim either gains or loses by each step he takes. True, being in Christ, the Believer shall not perish, but being a child of God, his naughtiness shall bring upon him certain and sharp chastisement. If he sins, he shall lose rest of spirit and somewhat of the light of his Lord’s Countenance. We can never afford to trifle with our actions, words, or thoughts. Even when we are alone and do not seem to have any duty imperatively impressed upon us—standing as we do, even in solitude, in the full blaze of the Divine inspection—it is always incumbent upon us to the highest degree to watch the outgoings of our hearts, lest by any means, by evil imaginations, we vex the Spirit of God.

Men become fools when they think with levity even of their most inconsiderable actions. Life is evermore a great solemnity, linked as it is to God and to eternity. Take care that you so regard it and never trifle with it as though it were a Vanity Fair. Many men seem to play at living, but he does best who lives earnestly and thoughtfully each single instant and lifts up his heart to God that every one of his separate thoughts, words and deeds may bear the scales of the Last Judgment and may be found in conformity with the righteousness of God. The first order, then, of a holy life, is the order of conformity to the Lord’s will.

Another form of order after which we should strive, I shall, for the helping of our memories, style the arithmetical. Things are never in order when the second is before the first, or the fifth takes precedence of the second. Order in life consists very much in seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and seeking other things in due place. Order in a Christian life consists in putting the soul, first, and the body second—in putting eternal treasure first and worldly gain second, third, fourth, or far behind—in seeking, first, the Glory of God—and our own happiness only as a subsidiary aim. Oh, it is well with the Christian when he has learned his numbers well and gives the first thing the first place, the second thing the second place and the third thing the third place!

Since many men make mistakes here and put the major in the place of the minor and the servant in the place of the master, let it be our daily prayer, “Lord, teach me this sacred arithmetic and order my steps in Your fear.” Another form of order is what the mathematicians know as geometrical. There should be a progress in Christian life. It should not merely be first, second and third, but there should be a continual advance. And if the advance is by a constant multiple, how greatly will a man increase! Why, take but the lowest number, two, and beginning with one, you come to two, four, eight, 16, 32, 64, 128, and so on, to I know not what greatness of number! He who did a little for Christ when but a babe in Divine Grace, should do more as a young man and most of all as a father.

He who, having but little faith, could bid the sycamore tree be plucked up, should, when he has more faith, command the mountain to be removed and cast into the sea! The youth who tore the lion in two, should, when a man, strike a thousand Philistines, hip and thigh, or tear up the gates of Gaza, posts and bar and all! We are never to be satisfied with what we have done. If you are self-content, you shall soon be poor. If you shall once say, “I have attained,” you shall drift down the current. But a holy dissatisfaction, a craving after holiness, an opening of the mouth, a panting after something better—this it is which will conserve what you have as well as enrich you in things to which you have not yet attained!

The right order for a Christian is the order of advance. “Superior,” cries the eagle, as he mounts higher and higher and leaves the clouds below him. Higher, higher, higher, Believer! This is God’s will concerning you and do not be slack to benefit yourself of the consecrated privilege. “Order my steps in Your Word, O Lord, by a constant geometrical progression, that I may grow in Grace and in the knowledge of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

There is another order which every Christian should observe, namely, the proportional order. There are certain duties which, to the uninstructed, appear to conflict with each other. How far am I to observe the first table? How far the second? Sometimes my duty to God may cross the track of my duty to my parents, or to my employer. What course, then, will be right? How far shall I go in either road without sin and where shall I stop without being guilty of omission one way or the other?

All Christians should endeavor to balance their lives that there shall not be an excess of one virtue and a deficiency of another. Alas, we have known professors whose Graces in one department have been so apparent as to become glaring, while the absence of Graces in another has been lamentably manifest! Some will have courage till they are rude and coarse and intrusive. Modesty will rule in others till they are cowardly and pliable. Not a few are so full of love that their talk is sickening with cant expressions, disgusting to honest minds—while others are so faithful that they see faults which do not exist! A third class are so tender that for the most glaring vice they make apologies and sin goes unrebuked in their presence.

The Character of our Lord was such that no one virtue had undue preponderance. Take Peter and there is a prominent feature peculiar to himself—one quality attracts you. Take John and there is a lovely trait in his character which at once chains you and his other Graces are unobserved. But take the life of the blessed Jesus and it shall perplex you to discover what virtue shines with purest radiance! His Character is like the lovely countenance of a classic beauty in which every single feature is in so exact harmony with all the rest, that when you have gazed upon it you are struck with a sense of general beauty, but you do not remark upon the flashing eyes, or chiseled nose, or the coral lips—an undivided impression of harmony remains upon your mind.

Such a character should each of us strive after—a mingling of all perfections to make up one perfection! A combining of all the sweet spices to make up a rare perfume, such as only God’s Holy Spirit, itself, can make, but such as God accepts wherever He discovers it. May we have Grace, then, to keep the virtues proportionate. And remember, this can only become ours by waiting upon God with daily prayer, crying evermore, “Order my steps in Your Word.”

Another form of order is that of relation. We stand not alone in this world. We are all the centers of circles and innumerable lines intersect each other in the region of our hearts. The Believer should ask that his steps may be ordered in conformity to the relations which he bears to all things. Towards God—what is the order of my life? To walk humbly with my God is my daily duty. O may God teach us this difficult virtue! Pride is inherent in us and I suppose we shall never lay it aside till we undress for our last bed. But pride before God, on the part of a sinful creature, must be a very abhorrent thing and our souls should daily agonize after true humility towards the Most High.

The Lord, moreover, deserves our love, our gratitude—and in consequence—our gratitude, our zeal, our daily service, our reverent homage, our loving consecration of spirit, soul and body to His cause. O that we did but live as in His sight, seeing Him who is invisible! We are God’s creatures, God’s children, God’s servants, God’s elect, members of Christ’s body, Christ’s spouse—what manner of people ought we, then, be? The Lord help us to live according to our relationship to Him. Then we also bear a relationship to the Christian Church—and there is a fitness of walk in reference to our fellow pilgrims. We are not to be censorious and yet not blind to their faults. We are to be zealous, but not passionate.

We are to be independent of man, but not disobedient to Christian rule and order. Alas, how many are unwilling to take their true place in the Church, but desire to be first and to be highly esteemed. To certain persons it is one of the hardest lessons to know how they ought to behave themselves in the House of God! Factious spirits cannot learn the lesson and must set up small establishments of their own—on the principle that they had sooner rule in Hell than serve in Heaven! They cannot bring themselves to acknowledge discipline or maintain order—from such may the Lord deliver us!

We must not forget our relationships to our families. He is a sorry Christian who would neglect to walk in his own household according to the duties required in the Word of God. Are you a child? Christianity does not loose you from honoring your parents. Are you a servant? The Gospel of Jesus does not teach you to be an eye-server, to purloin, or to be pert and disrespectful. Are you a master? Your religion puts you under bonds to be the best of masters, for you yourself have a Master, even Christ. Are you a parent? Religion imposes upon you new duties to train up your children in God’s fear.

Are we neighbors? Let us bless all around us—bless and curse not. Whoever our neighbor may be, we owe him, according to our Lord’s law, no small consideration. I have no right to annoy my neighbor. I have no right to do anything which causes him loss or injury—on the contrary, I am bound to love him as myself and if I can serve him in any way, to lay myself out to do so. Beloved, you have relationships towards sinners. These are of a very solemn kind. Since Christ loved you and died to save you, He has taught you to love others and to be willing even to lay down your lives that they may be saved. Do you see how this subject opens up? It widens before our mind’s eye into a boundless expanse!

What a strange thing must holiness be, then, if the man who possesses it has to act in conformity to a thousand relationships! What a wonderful piece of artistic adjustment! A painting by a master’s hand! A work of art unparalleled! A music of intricate and ravishing harmonies! “An honest man,” says the proverb, “is the noblest work of God.” The phrase is correct and a holy man has the Truth of God. I dare to affirm that the balancing of the clouds and the arranging of the firmament, the upheaval of the mountains and the guidance of the stars—the creation of living bodies with all their wondrous tissue of muscle and sinew and nerve—yes, and all other works of God put together do not exceed in splendor of wisdom and power the holiness of a life which has been molded by the Spirit’s sacred power!

In holiness God is more clearly seen than in anything else, save in the Person of Christ Jesus the Lord, of whose life such holiness is but a repetition. The relationships which encompass us on all hands cast a clear light upon David’s meaning in the words, “Order my steps in Your Word.” I have not quite finished this subject. I must call you to observe that there is an order of period—the order of the celestial Almanac. Punctuality is demanded. Seasons must be kept, due time must be regarded.

Now the Christian man can only be said to have his life ordered rightly as to time when all his time is sanctified to noblest ends. Perpetuity of uprightness is the very beauty of holiness. No man’s life is well ordered, if by fits and starts he is careful, and again is careless as to how he acts. Holiness consists not in the rushing of intense resolve, which like Kishon sweeps everything before it and then subsides, but in the constant flow of Siloah’s still waters, which perpetually make glad the city of our God. Holiness is no blazing comet, amazing nations with a transient glory. It is a fixed star that, with still radiance, shines on through the darkness of a corrupt age. Holiness is persevering obedience—it is not holiness at all if it is but occasional zeal and sensational piety.

Moreover, holiness as to its order in the matter of time is seasonable. It is the fault of numbers that their virtues are always too late—they are patient when the pain is over, generous when the opportunity for liberality has passed away. They are forgiving after they have vented their anger in unkind words. They are sorrowful after they have done the ill and therefore evidently right at heart—but if they could have abstained from the ill, how much better! The tree that God commends brings forth its fruit in its season. Would God we all had this ordering of our footsteps that we could bring forth the appropriate virtue in its time. O if I could have back those opportunities of pleading with sinners which I have allowed to slip, how would I hope to use them! Could I have back those times for glorifying my precious Master which have now, alas, rolled away with the years beyond the flood—how would I seek to honor His dear name! But the fruit in its season did not come, alas, alas, for me! My God, help me in the future, that when the time arrives, the man may be ready for the time by Your Spirit.

Once more on this point, there should be about the Christian’s holiness an order of suitability, by which I intend this—what would be right enough and as much as would be expected in an ordinary man, is not the measure of a Christian’s service to his God. “What do you do more than others?” is a very pertinent question to every professor of the faith of Christ. To be barely honest, to be barely just—what is this? There are thousands of Atheists who are all this! To be observant of the Sabbath, to be careful in the maintenance of regular family devotion, what is this? Many a hypocrite has done this year after year for a lifetime! There is a peculiar tenderness of walk, an elevation of spirit, an unworldliness of mind which is expected from the Christian—not as a man, but as a man twice born, as a favorite of Heaven, as one whose way is Christ, whose end is Christ—and who, therefore, cannot be allowed and tolerated in conduct such as might be expected from an unconverted man.

O Christian, you are a priest! Take care how you serve your God, at whose altar you stand! Let not merely the bells of your profession sound musically, but let the pomegranates of your holiness be your beauty. O Heir of Heaven, you are a king—play not with beggars! Grasp your scepter and rule over your lusts! Be of princely character, as you are of princely blood. You are a citizen of Heaven! Let your conversation be on high. You shall soon sit to judge angels? A place at the right hand of the great Judge in the last assize is reserved for you! As your honors, as your pedigree, as your estate, as your favors are, so let your life be and let your steps be ordered according to the dignity of your condition.

We have spent too long a time, but the subject tempted us. There are vast battalions of thought in ambush in the text.  
II. Very briefly, in the second place, we will note THE RULE of this order. “Order my steps in Your Word,” not “Order my steps according to my wishes.” This would be mere self-will. Many men order their steps according to the principle of worldly profit and loss—that is good that pays—that is sure to be avoided which costs too much. This is meanness and greed. The true follower of Jesus does not ask to have his steps ordered according to the rule of pleasure as those do who always choose the easiest road, whether it leads down to Hell or up to Heaven. This is childish folly.  
The good man is anxious to be conformed to God’s Word, let the road be rough or smooth. He does not ask to be conformed to precedent, as the multitude do who will not attempt what has never been done before—they must always tread where they can see the marks of traffic—custom is their law. Not so David. If he is the first to tread the path, he is well content if it is God’s way. It is folly to be singular except when to be singular is to be right! Then singularity, and even eccentricity, become the highest wisdom!  
Better go to Heaven alone than to Hell with a herd! The saint does not request to be conformed to tradition—little cares he for that—no, less than nothing. What matters it if one is damned according to old rubrics? Better by half to be saved according to the way which men call heresy. No, no! The saint cares not for the dogmas of priests or the traditions of the elders, but, “Order my steps in Your Word” is his prayer. Some, I know, fall into a very vicious habit, which habit they excuse themselves—namely, that of ordering their footsteps according to impressions.

Every now and then I meet with people whom I think to be rather weak in the head, who will journey from place to place and will perform follies by the gross under the belief that they are doing the will of God because some silly whim of their diseased brains is imagined to be an inspiration from above. There are occasionally impressions of the Holy Spirit which guide men where no other guidance could have answered the end. I do not doubt the old story of the Quaker who was disturbed at night and could not sleep and was led to go to a person’s house miles away and knock at the door just at the time when the inhabitant was about to commit suicide—just in time to prevent the act.  
I have been the subject of such impressions, myself, and have seen very singular results. But to live by impressions is oftentimes to live the life of a fool and even to fall into downright rebellion against the revealed Word of God. Not your impressions, but that which is in this Bible must always guide you. “To the Law and to the Testimony.” If it is not according to this Word, the impression comes not from God—it may proceed from Satan, or from your own distempered brain! Our prayer must be, “Order my steps in Your Word.  
Now, that rule of life, the written Word of God, we ought to study and obey. The text proves that the Psalmist desired to know what was in God’s Word—he would be a reader and a searcher. O Christian, how can you know what God would have you to do if your Bible is unthumbed and covered over with dust? The prayer implies, too, that when David once knew God’s Word, he wished to fulfill it all. Some are pickers and choosers. One of God’s commands they will obey—another they are conveniently blind to—even directly disobedient to it. O that it were not so with God’s people, that they had a balanced mind in their obedience and would take God’s Word without making exceptions, following the Lamb where ever He goes!  
“Order my steps,” Lord, not in a part of Your Word, but in all of it. Let me not omit any known duty, nor plunge into any known sin. There was, in David’s mind, according to this prayer, a real love for holiness. He was not holy because he felt he ought to be and yet would gladly be otherwise. If there were anything good and lovely, he desired to have it. If there were anywhere in God’s garden—a rare fruit or flower of purity and excellence— he longed to have it transplanted into his soul, that in all things his life might be the perfect transcript of the Word of God. Stick, then, to God’s Word. There is a perfect rule in the Divine statutes. May the Holy Spirit cast us in the mold of His Word.  
III. Thirdly, two or three words upon the DIRECTOR whom David had chosen. He applies to God Himself to order his steps. Much will depend upon the model that a man takes and the captain under whom a man serves. We read in the papers last week of a commanding officer at Aldershot who was obeyed by his soldiers with that prompt discipline which is peculiar to the British soldier. But through some mistake or mismanagement he managed to dash together two parties of dragoons so that one or two were injured and one man was killed outright.  
It is a glorious thing for us that we have a Commander who never makes such mistakes—who will so order our footsteps that our virtues shall not come into collision—and so direct our lives that it shall be always safe for us to follow His commands. What does David mean by putting himself under the orders of God? He means this. First, “Lord, give me a heart to love You—I beseech You, change me so, that whereas I once tended towards evil by the force of nature, I may now tend towards righteousness by a yet more powerful force—the force of a new nature. Order my footsteps, put a propelling power within my spirit that shall constrain my steps towards the right and the true and the holy.”  
He means next, “Lord, illuminate me to know Your Word. Pour a flood of light into my spirit that I may never mistake good for evil, never choose light for darkness. O light up the darkest recesses of my soul, that I may always discern at the very first look that which is contrary to Your mind, even when it comes in the most flattering disguise!” He means again, “Let Your Holy Spirit overshadow me. Let my spirit not only follow, but let Your Spirit lead the way. Let Your Spirit subdue all my faculties, understanding, affections and will. Let everything be subordinated to a Divine government that so being, no longer independent of You, I may be holy as You are holy.”  
He seems to mean again, “Charm me with the beauties of holiness. Let me so see the example of Your dear Son that I may be fascinated by it and compelled to do as He did by the Divine order and behest of His example.” And does not he also mean, “Lord, so arrange Providence that I may not be tempted above what I am able to bear. Check me when I am likely to sin. Send me help just when I shall need it to achieve some difficult task of obedience”? Providence works with Divine Grace. There is the hand of a man and the wing of an angel going together. And where God sets the soul to work after sanctification, He is quite sure to order both its outward joys and sorrows so that its holiness shall be promoted. Lord, do this and thus order my steps in Your Word.  
I have concluded when I have given two or three words of earnest practical advice. My Brothers and Sisters, especially you who are members of this Church, is it necessary that I commend to you earnestly to seek after conformity to the Lord’s Word as laid down in His revealed will? Should there be any such necessity, I beseech you hear me patiently but for a minute. You all desire to extend the power of the Gospel and the glory of Christ’s kingdom—know, then, that you can by no possibility do anything which shall be more likely to accomplish this than by seeking after holiness!  
A holy Church is always a powerful Church. A band of people without gifts, without wealth—but who exhibit much of the likeness of Christ—is a power in the land! Covet not talent, but covet Divine Grace! Pant not so much after honor as after holiness! This is the great point with you, if you are to win the battle for Christ and put the crown upon His head. O give me but to know that you are godly parents, that you are obedient children, that you are pious masters, that you are diligent servants, and my crown of rejoicing will be bright, indeed!  
But if your lips are unhallowed, your testimony goes for nothing and my crown is gone. I pray you, by the Glory of Him who wore the crown of thorns for you, by all His love and His compassion and by the love which you bear Him in return, “watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation,” and commit your ways unto God that they may be directed in His fear.  
Brothers and Sisters, I commend holiness to you, because above all things in this world it is one of the most comforting in the hour of trouble. Let a soul be brought low and let there be sin connected with its humiliation and there is a thorn in its pillow. But when a man knows that, in the sight of God, he has been kept from evil and his integrity cannot be impugned, then quiet reigns in his soul. There may be roaring tempests without, but his soul is at peace when he can say, “You have upheld me in my integrity, and You have set me before Your face forever.” Remember that the best way to enjoy fellowship is holiness.  
Many saints of God do not see Christ’s face by the month together because they are careless in their living. “How shall two walk together except they are agreed?” The Lord will not cast off His people, but at the same time He will not manifest to them the tenderness of His love unless they walk very carefully with Him. Much will be endured by a king from a common subject which could not be borne with from a courtier. You are of the king’s counsel! You are a favorite of the Lord! See that you walk circumspectly. The place where God is, according to Jacob, is a dreadful place and so it is, because there is a holiness required in the Presence of the Most High which should make us take off our shoes in holy dread.  
We have been for a long time sighing and crying because we do not see a revival of religion. It is the common talk with earnest souls that the times are stale. They are not so bad as they were, yet there is no advance in the kingdom such as we looked for. But remember, if we want to see the Master come in the power and fullness of His Spirit, one of the surest ways to get Him is to be more holy. His Church hinders the blessing by her inconsistency. A worldly Church chases away the Spirit of God. Wherever there is a people conformed to the maxims and ways of the world— indifferent in prayer and sluggish in effort—there will be the name to live, but there will be death.  
But where there is a people who, with little strength, have, nevertheless, kept God’s Word and above all have kept their garments unspotted, there will, before long, come the making bare of the almighty arm in the eyes of all the people! Wash, make yourselves clean, put away your secret iniquities, humble yourselves, O professors, before God! May the Lord give you the spirit of repentance! May He pour out His spirit upon each of us! May we put away the old leaven and so shall we keep the feast. May we shake ourselves from the dust of every sin—so shall we put on our beautiful garments and the time of the Church’s glory and our triumph shall come. My lips refuse to speak, as I wish they would, upon a theme which weighs upon my spirit right heavily. O God, send us holiness! If by no other means, then let trouble come to work in us hatred of sin! If You will not answer otherwise, then answer by terrible things in righteousness! O God, make us holy for Your honor’s sake!  
Lastly, I fear that mingled in this throng are some who never prayed the prayer, “Order my steps in Your Word,” for their steps are certainly not ordered in God’s Word. Some of you have uncertain steps—you are hovering between two opinions—you cannot make up your minds. O Fools and slow of heart! You cannot make up you minds? Which is better, God or the devil, holiness or sin, Heaven or Hell? It seems to be a point where no delays or considerations should be necessary! O that you were taught wisdom by the Holy Spirit and would hesitate no longer, but decide this day! As the Lord my God lives, you have but a short time to live and if you continue hesitating, as some of you have done these 40 and 60 years, the sermons you have heard and the pricks of your conscience shall be swift witnesses against you to condemn you!

There are others whose steps were never ordered in God’s Word, for their ways are hypocritical. They walk today like Christians, tomorrow as worldlings. They sing the songs of Zion and they chant the hymns of Baal. They worship the Lord with His people, but they worship Bacchus, also, with his votaries. Alas for the many who wear a mask and a disguise and make fair pretences and a glittering show, but the truth is not in them! I fear there are some of you whose steps are not ordered by God, for your ways are sin. Pleasure enchants you! Alas this fleeting pleasure—whose cup glitters with bubbles—but whose dregs are Hell! Would God you would cease from your evil ways and turn at His rebuke, for then He has promised He will have mercy upon you!  
Among us, this morning, are many whose outward conduct is unblemished and whose morals are excellent, but yet their heart is not right with God. They live without prayer day after day. They have an atheistic heart which shuns the Deity. I put this prayer before you not that you may use it, but that you may judge yourselves by it. And if this one prayer condemns you, how will you bear the majesty of the Judge of all the earth who shall come in Person to judge the world in righteousness according to our Gospel?  
Jesus has died for sinners. He came to save the ungodly. Trust Him! Trust Him! Trust Him and from this day you shall begin to live! O may the Spirit of God help you to trust Him and then, but not till then, shall you be in a fit state to breathe this prayer for sanctification to God of perfect holiness, “Order my steps in Your Word.”

*PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SEMON—Psalm 119:129-152.*  
Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307. Sermon #1572 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

ALIVE  
NO. 1572

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 12, 1880, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“The righteousness of Your testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding and I shall live.”  
Psalm 119:144.**

YESTERDAY afternoon I was the subject of a somewhat singular circumstance. An esteemed friend and relative came over to my house, evidently laboring under great disturbance of mind and having enquiries to make of a very important order. I was, at the time, walking in the garden, so that I did not see him and he appeared to have great difficulty in mentioning the subject of his concern to my wife. At last it came out that he had seen a gentleman who had informed him that it was generally rumored that I had been taken ill with heart disease and had died in a very short time. My friend came to the point by cautious degrees and asked at length if I was seriously ill. “No,” was the joyful reply of my beloved, “he is much the same as usual.”

Then it was clear I was not dead and the great fear was removed. The question was put, “Would you like to see him?” But my kind friend was perfectly satisfied and was too full of joy to wish to linger—he would go back and answer with certainty the many enquiries which continued to be made at the Tabernacle. How the report originated, I am quite at a loss to tell. It has evoked much kindness, but it is rather odd to feel called upon to assure your friends that you are yet alive! I can but show myself and ask my friends to see for themselves if I look like a dead man! When the peculiarity of the position had given place to other thoughts, it struck me in a solemn manner that the report might have been true and my death will assuredly be a fact one day unless our Lord should come speedily.

Only sparing mercy from God’s right hand has prevented it being true at this moment. We do not realize our mortality unless we are startled into a recognition of it. We believe others to be mortal and are not much surprised when they fall, but we have a secret notion that no axe will, for the present, be laid at our root. Yet reason would lead a man to ask, “It happens to many, to die suddenly, why should it not happen to me?” I regard the incident as a call to me to stand ready to depart at any time. Let it be a warning to you, also, to set your houses in order, for in a moment Death may surprise you!

A practical lesson may be gathered from the very natural scene which followed my friend’s departure. I came in from my walk and found myself suddenly seized by my wife with both hands—grasping the front of my coat she turned me round and looked at me steadily with a most tender gaze, declaring that she must take a double look at me and hold me before her eyes to be quite sure that her husband was yet alive to her unutterable joy. This special outpouring of thankfulness might have been lost had it not been for the rumor and, so far, it is well. May all of you be moved to the same feeling towards your dear ones whenever they come home at night alive! What would you do without them?

What desolation would it cause in the house if a messenger hurriedly rushed into your house with the news of their sudden death? How we ought to love those who are spared to us and to praise God to think they are still alive. Suppose they were suddenly removed—have we valued them rightly? Try and act towards them as you would act if you knew that they would die today. If husband or wife had died, what a sorrow it would be if an unkind word had been spoken, or a difference had arisen just before the last look! What a painful cause for future regret! Let your affection to those about you gush forth freely as you reflect that God has spared them to you.

Bless God, good woman, that you are a wife and not a widow! Bless God, Christian man, that you sit side by side with your dear spouse and have not to go weeping to her grave. What a blank! What a darkness! What a gloom would come over your household if either of the parents should be suddenly taken away! Therefore, praise God and be thankful and let us try to live towards one another and towards our Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus in such a way as we should wish to have done if they were suddenly to be taken. Pray for your pastor the more earnestly because you might, this morning, have missed him from your midst—and he will try and preach more earnestly to you because you may be gone before he will have another opportunity of addressing you.

Let us continue knit together in love as long as we live, for the tie which now binds us together may soon be snapped. Out of a painful rumor may thus come a great blessing to families and congregations if it shall cause an increase of mutual love and an outpouring of united gratitude for sparing mercies! So much for a lesson as to this mortal life. By this incident I was further led to turn a heart-glance upon myself and to say, “I wonder whether there is any question as to whether I am alive in the higher sense?” That I am alive as to my natural life is clear enough—but is my spiritual life equally evidenced? This is a very necessary enquiry, for it is easy enough to make a fair show in the flesh and yet to be alienated from the life of God.

Many abide in death, even as the Apostle says—“To be carnally-minded is death; but to be spiritually-minded is life and peace.” The enquiry came home to my own heart and, therefore, I suggest it to yours, for it may profit you. Brothers and Sisters, do you live unto God? Are you walking as those who are alive from the dead? Remember, my Sisters, that it is written, “She that lives in pleasure is dead while she lives”—may no woman here come under that condemnation! Brothers, I call upon you, also, to remember the word of the Lord Jesus to the Church of Sardis, “I know your works, that you have a name that you live and are dead.”

Many exist upon the face of the earth, but into “life” they have never entered. They know not the Spirit and because they are strangers to His indwelling, they live after the flesh and mind the things of the flesh and of these it is written, “If you live after the flesh you shall die.” Ask yourselves, then, these questions—have you been quickened from your death in trespasses and sins? Does the Divine Life beat within you in such a forceful and healthful manner that there can be no question about it? Is your life “hid with Christ in God” and are you numbered with the living in Zion? The living, the living! He shall praise you, O God, as we do this day!

My subject is life—may the Lord of Life help me to speak of it after a lively manner! A consideration of the text will help in the enquiry as to whether we live unto God or not and it may further help those who sigh after the Divine Life to discover the way of Divine quickening. Let us again read the text, “The righteousness of Your testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding and I shall live.” Here we have a touchingly humble prayer for life—“Give me understanding and I shall live.”

We will first consider this prayer in its simplicity. Secondly, I shall try to open it up more fully and, thirdly, we will go still deeper and search into the argument upon which the prayer is founded. There is a something about God’s testimonies which will impart and sustain life, therefore the putting of the two sentences together—“The righteousness of Your testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding and I shall live.”

I. First, then, let us CONSIDER THIS PRAYER IN ITS SIMPLICITY. Without diving into its depths, let us see what lies upon its surface. This prayer is adapted for very general use. It would suit a child and be equally becoming from a venerable father. It might fall from the lips of those in whom there is but the faintest sign of Divine Grace and it might as fitly be used by those in whom Grace is ripening into Glory! We ask you to notice, first, that this is a suitable prayer for the awakened sinner. He discovers himself to be guilty and he perceives that there is a punishment for sin and so far he understands his position.

Alarmed by his conscience, he thinks he sees the Judge upon the Great White Throne about to pronounce the final sentence and he knows what it must be, for it is written, “The soul that sins, it shall die.” So far he understands well enough. He hears, also, that there is life, life in Christ Jesus, life for guilty men—but his mind is much confused with many terrors and with the horrible dread of the sure consequences of his sin. He has sufficient faith in the Revelation of God to know that there is life in a look at the Crucified One, but he does not quite understand what that look

 means. He knows that there is salvation in one name and in no other, but he does not quite comprehend what that faith is which obtains for a sinner the virtue of that saving name.

Then is his time to pray, “Give me understanding and I shall live.” He needs illumination for his darkened mind that he may see the way of salvation, that he may look to Christ and, by understanding the doctrine of His substitutionary Sacrifice, may be enabled, at once, to trust in Jesus and live! Christ is our life, but we need understanding, or we shall miss it. It is a blessed understanding which enables a man to feel that though the sentence of death may be in his members, yet he must and shall live if he believes in the Lord Jesus! What did the Lord Jesus say in His prayer for His people? “And this is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.” I pray you will, dear Hearers, if you feel your need of this life, let the prayer of the text go up quietly from your hearts—“Give me understanding and I shall live.”

Equally applicable, however, will this be in the case of one who is a Christian and who is struggling against temptation. Perhaps, my Brother, you are placed in a position where you are fiercely tempted from without by the world and possibly you may fear that you will not be able to survive it. It comes with such force that you are staggered by its power! You feel that you cannot bear up under such pressure! You despair of your spiritual life! Well, then, ask God to bring home His Word to your heart, that you may act wisely and may meet the rebuke of the ungodly and the temptations of the wicked—prudently baffling the adversary by your sacred vigilance. Pray, “Give me understanding and I shall live,” for a clear understanding is necessary for your preservation from the enemy. May God make you wise as serpents and harmless as doves!

Possibly the temptation comes from within you. There are passions within you which, at times, violently rebel and you are in anguish while you struggle to mortify them, though mortified they must be. Your soul abhors evil and wrestles against the lusts of the flesh, agonizing that you may walk before God in integrity, pleasing Him in all things. At times you are harshly beset and Satan, himself, draws near to aid the flesh with his fearful insinuations, or even by injecting blasphemous thoughts. Then is your hour of peril, for you are pressed out of measure while the enemy howls at you—“The Lord has forsaken you! Your God will be gracious no more!” Ah, then you need to know how to handle your weapons, the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, and that master weapon of AllPrayer!

Perhaps you feel yourself so confused that you do not know what Scripture to plead in prayer, nor do you know what you should pray for as you ought. Well, then, remember the blessed word of Scripture, “If any man lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives to all men liberally and upbraids not.” Let this be your prayer—“Give me understanding and I shall live, in spite of the assaults of the enemies.” Though there are fights without and fears within, we shall overcome the world, the flesh and the devil and we shall live as Christian men, adorning the doctrine of God, our Savior, in all things if the Lord will give us a clear understanding of His Word and holy prudence and judgment by which we shall know how to behave ourselves wisely in a perfect way.

Do you not think that this prayer will often well up from the heart of the suffering Believer? To some of our dear Brothers and Sisters, life is one long pang, for bodily disease has fixed its fangs in their flesh. There are others whose life is always from hand to mouth and sometimes bread is scant in the cupboard so that grinding poverty breaks them to dust. These are sore ills for those know who have to bear them. Some, too, are subject to domestic trials, watching daily the pining away of one they love, or bereavement has followed bereavement till they seem left alone in the land. Alas, the insatiate archer has taken a poisoned arrow from his quiver, yet again and again and love has had to weep over the terrible accuracy of his aim.

Beloved Ones who have been called to suffer in these ways, have you not cried out at times, “I shall never be able to bear it! I shall die of a broken heart under these great afflictions! O that I might hide in the grave”? You fear that you will perish if the pressure continues, but you will do no such thing! God will help you to bear your burden by sustaining your soul with heavenly meat that others know nothing of. If the load is not made lighter, the shoulders shall be made stronger and this shall be done by your having a clearer understanding of the Word of God and a fuller experience of its supporting power! You do not so much need health, or wealth, or freedom from trouble, as more understanding of the Lord’s mind and will in all the dispensations of His Providence. Breathe, then, the prayer to your heavenly Father—“Give me understanding and I shall live.”

Divine Grace can make us live like the three holy children in the fire, or like Jonah at the bottom of the sea, or like Daniel in a den of lions! It can make us patient in tribulation and joyful in distress—and Grace works by making us understand the Word of the Lord. Brethren, if we are taught of the Lord, we can live between the jaws of death and sing a song unto our Well-Beloved amid the wailings of famine and pestilence! By a God-given understanding, we shall know that all things work together for our good and so we shall “take pleasure in infirmities, in necessities and in distresses,” for when we are weak, then are we strong!

I thank God that a large number now present are not so much sufferers as workers. Now, I know that you who are working for God and trying to win souls often feel as if you were not half alive. I am compelled to make such a confession myself. I need to get alive to the utmost—not only having life, but having it “more abundantly.” I have some life in me, thank God, but I need it to quicken me more completely! Sometimes we get into a sleepy state and then the Spirit chides us and we cry, “This will never do.”—

*“Dear Lord! Shall we always live  
At this poor dying rate?  
Our love so faint, so cold to You,  
And You to us so great?”*

We need quickening, Brothers and Sisters! Do you not feel that it is so? I believe that those who are most earnest are the very persons who blame themselves the most for need of earnestness. When your whole soul is being consumed, you feel as if you need the coals of juniper to be blown up to a yet more vehement flame that you may go up like a cloud of incense unto God, dissolved in His service, consumed in His praise! Here, then, is our prayer, “Give me understanding and I shall live. Make me so to feel the power of Your Word that I may be ardent, fervent, full of life!” I will alter the poet’s lines and say*—*

*“Lives of saintly men assure us*

*We may make our lives sublime.”*  
We can live to noble purpose if, in answer to this prayer, God the Holy Spirit shall teach us to profit and give us understanding to know the will of the Lord and obey it faithfully.

O you who would work successfully and acceptably, ask the great Lord of the Harvest to enlighten your hearts and minds that you may not labor as in the dark, but as wise men made expert by the Holy Spirit. Is not this a very proper and blessed prayer for aspiring minds in the Church of God, of whom I trust there are many present? Such men are not satisfied with themselves, but press forward to that which is yet beyond and above them. They have not reached that imaginary climax which some prattle of who dote upon their fancied perfectness—but their motto is, “Onward! Upward! Heavenward!” These dwell on high, but their cry is, “Higher! Higher!”

They walk with God and therefore say—  
*“Oh for a closer walk with God.”*  
They are calm and happy, but yet they sigh for a still serener frame. They have power in prayer, but they long for more of a wrestling spirit and for greater prevalence with God. If there are any here who are fired with such Divine ambitions, what better prayer can they use than this—“Give me understanding and I shall live”? For if God teaches us rightly to use the Divine Word so as to mark, learn and inwardly digest it by the understanding, then shall we be nourished into complete manhood and shall go from strength to strength! The new man is renewed in knowledge and nourished by the Truth of God and, “we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

Our prayer must be that the Lord would make us understand what He would have us do and how to do it. Then shall we live when we are made of “quick understanding in the fear of the Lord” and ready in heart to perfect all His will. This will be an angelic life, for those holy beings do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His Word. It will be a seraphic life, for as we burn with holy fervor we shall resemble those ministers whom God makes to be a flaming fire! It will be a heavenly life, for we shall strive to do the Lord’s will on earth as it is done in Heaven. Do you long for this? The way to it is not to be found in dreams and visions and fanatical excitements and delirious conceits, but in a calm, quiet, solid and deep understanding of the revealed Word of God! Our Lord prayed—“Sanctify them through Your truth, Your Word is truth.” No other means are needed for the fullest development of holiness—you only require the Word to be unveiled by the Spirit to your mind and understanding and in the utmost sense of the term you shall “live.”

Last of all, when we shall not be so much aspiring saints as expiring saints—when we come to lie upon our last bed and to look into the unseen—then may we still pray after the same fashion! When the eyes shall begin to open to the light of Heaven and things but darkly seen, before, grow clearer in the dawn of the eternal day—when the songs of angels begin to break upon the opening ears of the soul and Heaven is drawing near, for Grace is ripening into Glory and Glory is coming to welcome its heir—then may we pray to live through the understanding and experience of the Divine Word! How blessed it will be to have such an understanding of Divine realities that we shall stay ourselves upon the promises, shall rejoice in the Everlasting Covenant and derive strong consolation from the oath of God.

How blessed, then, to understand our living union with our risen Lord and to know the experience of the happy Psalmist when He sang—“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.” With God’s Spirit within us lighting up the soul by the understanding of the fact that Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life, we shall live in the midst of death and find our Savior’s Words to be true—“He that lives and believes in Me shall never die.” We shall ford that shallow stream of death, which, while it chills our feet, shall not be able to chill our hearts! It may stop our pulse, but it shall not silence our song which shall rise higher and higher as speech shall fail. We shall but shut our eyes on earth and open them in Heaven, for God, who has given us understanding here below shall, surely, give us to dwell above where they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament!

And thus, I think, I have shown you that this prayer sounds well on every note of the scale. You may sound it out of the depths of seeking penitence and you may run up to the very highest note with the expectancy of Glory and the words will sound well on any note you touch. From the wicket gate of humble faith up to the gate of pearl which admits into the golden city, you may go on praying, “Give me understanding and I shall live.”

II. The time has come when under our second division THE PRAYER IS TO BE MORE FULLY OPENED UP. “Give me understanding and I shall live.” Here is a need confessed because it is deeply felt—the suppliant acknowledges his need of understanding. Has that need been felt by you, my Brothers and Sisters? It certainly exists, “For vain man would be wise, though man is born like a wild ass’s colt.” The wittiest, wisest, best instructed man who has only human learning, if he knows not God, has reached no further than that acme of all carnal wisdom spelled in four letters, “FOOL.” We are all fools till God gives us understanding! A sense of our own folly is the first step of all wisdom. To cry out after understanding proves that we have already received some understanding for, mark you, this text of mine is the prayer of a man of God!

I suppose the 119th is David’s Psalm—at any rate it is the Psalm of a very gracious Spirit-taught man and you see he still cries, even though he has understanding in a measure, “Give me understanding.” He that is taught of God is the man that asks to be taught of God and she who has chosen the good part is the woman who sits at Jesus’ feet to hear His Words. It is the mark of a wise man that he does not think himself so and that he continues to pray, “Give me understanding.” It is true of us all, that apart from the gifts of God, by His Spirit, we are without understanding and as naturally go astray as silly sheep. Note this fact and be well persuaded of it, that you may pray with the greater earnestness.

Next, the prayer is evidently put upon the footing of free Grace. He prays, “Give me understanding”—it must be a gift from God. The prayer is directed to God, for God, alone, can give understanding. Teachers can enlighten an understanding which already exists, but they cannot give one. Masters and instructors can profit nothing till we have an understanding with which to receive knowledge aright. Any man who is taught in the Word can teach us the letter of Scripture, but no man can give us an inner understanding of its spirit—that must be a revelation and it must be worked in us by Him that made the light and the sun, or we shall never come to an understanding of the Word of God!

Let it always be known that all Light of God is from the Lord Jesus, Himself—“In Him was life and the life was the light of men.” “That was the true Light which lights every man that comes into the world.” All real understanding of the Word of God must come to us as it did to the disciples on the road to Emmaus, of whom it is written, “Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures.” The Author of the sacred Volume must, Himself, expound it to the heart and understanding or we shall be blinded by its light rather than made to see. David prayed, “Open You my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Your Law” and we must pray the same.

When the Lord graciously hears our supplications, we must take care to give Him all the praise and glory of the work, for it will be a deed of Grace and Grace alone. If He left us in darkness we could not complain, for we have refused the Light and if He opens our eyes, we must glorify His mercy and cry, “Blessed be the Lord who has shown us light.” Brothers and Sisters, the Psalmist speaks of understanding in a general way— “Give me understanding”—as if he wanted the faculty for use in many directions. In every transaction of this life we need to be prudent, for we are surrounded by a thousand snares and pitfalls and if we do not exercise discretion we shall be taken all unawares and become the prey of our enemies. We bear within our own natures so much to confuse and confound and entangle that if we are not taught prudence and understanding we shall certainly never escape from the mischief that is within us.

We are frequently like men in a fog who cannot tell where they are. It happened but the other day near Milan that so dense a fog covered the railway that a number of workmen who were employed upon the line heard the sound of an approaching luggage train and rushed to get away from it—but at that same moment an express train, which they had not heard or seen, came rushing upon them and cut them to pieces. Such is our condition at times—we try to get away from one temptation and we fall into another—we hope to escape one form of evil and we rush into another! Haste breeds heedlessness and warmth of zeal is apt to beget indiscretion so that we daily need a good share of understanding as a ballast to our sail.

A Christian man should be a sensible man, a man with all his wits about him. He needs to possess the wisdom of the Book of Proverbs as well as the devotion of the Psalms and the rapture of Solomon’s Song. Those books are placed together in the Bible as if to show that they ought to be read together and that their spirit and influence are essential to a complete practical character. I would have you bow your ears to the voice of your Well-Beloved, but you must also be ready to deal with the voices of everyday life. It is one of the objects of true religion to give subtlety to the simple and to the young man, knowledge and discretion. We must not be ignorant of the devices of the devil, nor childish in yielding credence to the falsehoods of men.

We need, in all the walks of life, to exercise understanding and, thank God, we may learn to do so, for the Scriptures say, “The Lord gives wisdom: out of His mouth comes knowledge and understanding. He lays up sound wisdom for the righteous: He is a buckler to them that walk uprightly. He keeps the paths of judgment and preserves the way of His saints.” Still, while the understanding sought for in the prayer is evidently of a general character, the former portion of the verse links it with a special understanding of the Word of God and, oh, Beloved, we need, above all things, to understand what God has revealed! Take care, first, that you know it. Search the Scriptures—let them be the man of your right hand. Prevent the night watches while you search them. Prevent the dawn of the day by meditating upon them. Be you scribes well-instructed in the Law of the Lord.

Next, believe the Divine Revelation. Be it your prayer that you may so understand the Lord’s statutes as fully to accept them by faith. Believe the teachings of the Word as realities, not locking them up in the dark dungeon of a forgotten creed, but making them bright realities in the life and liberty of your Christian action and full of influence upon every movement of your mind. Knowing and believing, it will be time to advance to meditation. Consider the Words of God—weigh them, test them, dive into them. The richest ore lies deepest. There may be sands of gold sparkling upon the surface of the Bible, but the great nuggets are reserved for those who dig deep both by day and by night! Consider well the words of Eternal Life and then go on to obey their teaching.

You will never have an understanding of the Word unless you practice it. He who does the will of God shall know of the doctrine. We know nothing aright till our hearts come into complete subjection to the Spirit. Oh for such an understanding as this, that the inner life may be nourished to fullness of stature by feeding on the Bread from Heaven! To this must be added experience, for who understands the Word of God till he has experienced its truth and power? What a blessed knowledge of a promise you receive when it is fulfilled to you! How you understand the reality of prayer when you have received an answer! How you know the meaning of communion with Christ when your face shines with having seen Him! How you understand the secret consolations of the Holy Spirit when, in deep water, you have felt their wondrously lifting power!

This prayer means so much that in one sermon I cannot open it all up to you. Nor, indeed, could I do so were a lifetime at my disposal! O Lord, give us understanding to know, to believe, to consider, to practice and to experience Your Word! Let each man cry, “O God, give me this and then I shall truly live!” I think you will begin to see what a connection there is between all this and the testimonies of the Lord, for the righteousness of the Divine Word is to be transcribed into the letter of our daily life if we are to live to the fullest. Permit me, now, to say that no man who is at all awakened can really live unless he knows the Word of God and understands its inner meaning. For this reason—Do you call it life to live without the Light of God?

You may have been in the sepulchral dungeons of Venice where not a ray of light ever came to the unhappy prisoners. To linger there, do you call that life? To live without the Light of God is just such an existence! We have heard of men who have been immured in dungeons for 40 years, constantly wearing manacles, never breathing fresh air—do you call that life? Can there be “life” where there is no liberty? Alas, some men have never been free, but have remained captives to their lusts, never knowing the liberty with which Christ makes men free. Do you call such bondage, life? Another essential of life is love. To have nobody to love and nobody to love you—is that life? Yet many a soul feels that it cannot be content with

 earthly love and yet if it has not the love of God, the love of Christ, the love of the Spirit, it is loveless! Do you call that life?

Infinite love is a necessity of an immortal spirit. Without light, without liberty, without love there is no life. But more, many men exist without peace—driven to and fro like a sere leaf by the tempest. Never resting, they are as a rolling thing before the whirlwind. Do you call that life? “There is no peace, says my God, to the wicked.” Is that life? And then to have no grand objective, no objective worthy of yourself—to be living in this world merely to get enough bread and cheese to eat, just keeping yourself breathing and your family breathing—is that life? No heavenly objective? No ambition worthy of an immortal spirit? Do you call that life?

Death before you, which you dare not think of! No hope, unless it is the ghastly figment of annihilation! Dreadful hope! To me a thought most horrible! To live without hope is not life—far rather call it death. Lord, give me understanding of Your everlasting testimonies—then I shall live, but I shall never live till You grant me this gift!

III. Now we will take the third step and go deeper, LAYING BARE THE ARGUMENT OF THIS PRAYER. What does he mean by saying, “The righteousness of Your testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding and I shall live”? I think he means this—that the Word of God, when it is practically and experimentally understood by the mind, is a pledge of life. Do you think that God would take one of us to be His child and teach us His Word and then, after all, permit us to be condemned to die? Is that His fashion? Did you ever hear of a judge who instructed a criminal in the arts and sciences laboriously for years with the view of executing him when the task was done? Nothing of the sort!

If the Lord has taught you, it is because the Lord has bought you and He will not lose the purchase of His blood! If the Lord has taught you, it is because He means to take you where your education will be completed— to take you Home to dwell with Him above! “Give me understanding and I shall live”—I am quite clear about that. If You, great God, have made me understand the evil of sin, the preciousness of the blood of Christ, the power of Your Spirit, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit—if You have made me experimentally to understand this, I know I shall live, for You will not make me ashamed of my hope—

*“Can He have taught me to trust in His name, And have brought me thus far to put me to shame?”*

The next argument is this—an understanding of the Word of God is life because we are told that the Word of God is the “living and incorruptible Seed which lives and abides forever.” Very well, then, if that Seed is sown in my heart, my heart must live forever. There can be no death where the Seed is incorruptible! If the Word of the Lord is living within us, then there is within us a life eternal! Be you sure of this, then—if you have enjoyed a vital experience of God’s Word, you have within you a well of water springing up into everlasting life!

Furthermore, the Word of God is not only the Seed of life, but it is the food of life. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God shall man live.” And if you live on the Word that comes out of God’s mouth, you cannot die. How can you? For in the Word of God you read of the “flesh,” which is, “meat indeed,” and that “blood” which is, “drink indeed.” And the Incarnate Word, Himself, has said, “He that eats Me, the same shall live by Me. Because I live, you shall live, also.” There is forcible argument here!

Once more, the understanding of God’s Word is the very flower and crown and glory of true life. When a man so understands God’s Word as to experience it and to practice it, he has reached a high point of spiritual culture and his life will be loaded, like Aaron’s rod, with buds and blossoms and fruit unto God’s glory! He will be such a man that he shall only need to take one step and be in Heaven! He is a shock of corn fully ripe, each single stalk bowing its head towards the earth as if it asked to be gathered in. Let us pray God will give us an understanding of His blessed Word, for then we shall be ripe for Glory and in the highest sense it will be true that we shall “live.”

I have scarcely a minute to spare, but I must venture to detain you while we observe that the Psalmist alludes to one point in reference to God’s Word which is, to us, the very marrow and fatness of the whole. God’s Word is said to be righteous—“The righteousness of Your testimonies is everlasting.” Now, upon this righteousness the life of every Christian hangs. “God is not unrighteous to forget your work of faith and labor of love.” “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” A righteous God cannot destroy a man in whom His Grace has worked an understanding of His Word, for that were to deal unrighteously with him, since he is justified by the knowledge of Christ.

The godly serve a just God and a Savior and, therefore, they have nothing to fear. This righteousness of God’s Word is so certain that it is said to be everlasting. Brothers and Sisters, my life hangs on the everlastingness of all God’s Word! If it can change, then I must die—but if it cannot change, then I shall live. The righteousness of God, according to the text, is everlasting since none can challenge it. No caviler will ever prove God’s way of salvation, or of Providence, to be unrighteous. If that could be done, then the Believer might die. But since that righteousness cannot be disproved, he shall live. “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” The Divine righteousness stands fast forever and ever, settled in Heaven, ordained to answer all demands throughout all ages. Let us so understand it as to take it to be ours and we shall live!

I cannot understand the notion of certain professing Christians that a change comes over Christianity as the ages move on—that there is a Christianity for the first century and a revised Christianity for the present era! We have become very enlightened of late! You are aware that this is the marvelous 19th Century! We have invented the electric light and none can deny that we are the most enlightened people that ever lived on the face of the earth! It is not, of course, pride on our part to say so, for we are very modest. Among us there are men who are wonderfully brilliant—Paul was but a farthing candle compared with them. They understand, by culture and thought, so much that it is an honor to speak with them!

The Gospel that was preached to the poor, which childlike persons understood by the enlightening influence of the Holy Spirit, is, in their eyes a very poor business. They sneer and turn up their cultured noses at what they call, “the simple Gospel,” as if a simple Gospel were meant for simpletons. Well, now, to my mind this is the very bliss and blessedness of the Gospel—that the righteousness of God’s testimonies is everlasting— that though it has been tried by criticism and tested by experience, it remains the same in its spotless purity and in its Divine Infallibility to this day! If God should be pleased to lengthen out the life of any of you till you are as old as Methuselah, you will not have to say, “I must die now, for the Gospel is worn out. I must perish now, for the righteousness of the Word of God has been disproved.”

Thus says Jehovah, “I am the Lord, I change not, therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.” We may catch the echo of His proclamation and say, “Because the Word which reveals our God never changes, therefore we shall live.” Do you need a better Gospel, any of you? Go and fish for it, if you do, but not in the waters of the Truth of God! Do you need any nobler promise, any surer covenant? Wander through the deserts of salt till your skeleton lies bleaching there, for that will be your only reward if you turn away from the feast of fat things, of wines on the lees well-refined. As for me, I bless God that the righteousness of His testimonies is everlasting and by them I mean to abide all my days, God helping me.

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STRUGGLING AGAINST SIN  
NO. 3482

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 21, 1915.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“I cried with my whole heart; hear me, O Lord: I will keep Your statutes. I cried unto You; save me, and I shall keep Your testimonies.” Psalm 119:145, 146.**

THE fear of punishment leads many people to think about their sins. And a dread of Hell in the future fills the retrospect of their past life with gloom and remorse. This is natural. It may happen to anyone, as it has happened to tens of thousands, that the peril has haunted them till at length the penalty has overtaken them. Although they have been constantly terrified with a sense of the Divine Wrath, they have never penitently looked to the Divine Mercy. Thus they have continued to despond and they have gone on to despair—and that utter desperation has curdled into a bitter remorse which has been the forecast of their eternal retribution! But it appears to me that there is a work of Grace in the heart where there is a fear of sin rather than a fear of Hell—where the desire of the soul is not so much to escape from the punishment, as to escape from the guilt which is the cause of the punishment. What thief, what murderer, when he has been arrested, convicted, sentenced and brought to the gallows, does not wish he had not committed the crime that sealed his doom? Yet there is a wide difference between a dread of suffering for the wrong you have done and a dread of doing wrong! Judge yourselves, if you are under religious impressions of any sort, whether you have merely a fear of punishment—for that is an instinct of nature—or whether you have a fear and abhorrence of sin, for that is a work of Divine Grace!

Now our text exhibits to us the frame of mind of one whose chief prayer was that he might keep God’s statutes—and his chief anxiety lest he should fail to observe them. Oh, that you might be brought to this state of heart, those of you who are not saved! And may those of you who are saved have this state of heart perpetually in exercise! A tender heart, a scrupulous conscience, a tenacity of offending God in thought, in word, or in deed should hold us in check every day and every hour. Let us continually cry unto God to save us from violating His precepts and compel us to keep His testimonies. I address myself very indiscriminately to all who hear my voice, desiring that the text may prove a test whereby everyone should examine himself. Do we, or do we not, desire to get rid of every evil way? Are we anxious to be sincere and without offense, holy in our character and obedient to God’s statutes in our lives? The man who really does desire this will be sure to pray for it. “I cried,” says the Psalmist. And then again he says, “I cried.” Moreover, he combines his prayer with strong resolution, “I cried unto You; hear me, O Lord: I will keep Your statutes.” Still further he seasons his prayer with a deep sense of his own weakness, for he puts it thus, “I cried unto You; save me, and I shall keep Your statutes.” Well then—

I. EVERY MAN WHO DESIRES PURITY OF HEART AND CHARACTER WILL BETAKE HIMSELF TO PRAYER.  
While struggling after purity, he will soon discover that he is unable to reach it of himself. Have you ever thought that you had destroyed an evil tendency in your disposition—and then found in an unguarded moment that you fell into the temptation from the coils of which you did suppose you had escaped? You have resolved in the morning, maybe at the hour of prayer, that throughout the day your temper should be calm and quiet. Yet very likely before breakfast was over, you were more ruffled than usual. Where you fancied you had set a double guard, there it was that you were taken by surprise! You thought yourself weak in one point, but it did not happen to be that on which you were beset! Where you said to yourself, “I am safe,” there you were betrayed. You must have found this out, if you are striving against sin. When it has occurred many times, you will have a habitual mistrust of yourself. Does it happen but once, you will be driven by a sense of your own incompetence to call in the sacred might of God, that with the arms of the Eternal, you may defeat the infernal adversary, prevail over your evil passions and conquer your besetting sin. “I cried unto You,” says David. Not as though it were a trifling skirmish, but as one who felt that he was perilously besieged. “I cried unto You with my whole heart, for I must vanquish this sin, or be vanquished by it! I could not conquer it by myself, so I cried to You, O my God,” and I said, “Oh, display Your power, and by the Irresistible might of Your Holy Spirit, crush this dragon within my nature! Beat it down, that it may rise up no more.”  
The importunity of this prayer shows his estimate of the value he set on the blessing he craved. Read verses 145, 146 and 147, and you will perceive how he repeats himself—“I cried.”“I cried unto You.” “I rose before the dawning of the morning, and cried.” Three times does he reiterate it! He was not to be put off. He felt he must get the mastery of sin. Hence, in sheer desperation, the good man cries again, and again, and again, “O God, deliver me, that I may keep Your testimonies.” Pray often, Beloved, for sin will tempt often. Cry mightily, for Satan will tempt mightily. Innumerable snares will he place in your path—let your countless entreaties outnumber his devices!  
The expression by which he memorializes his prayer shows us the intensity of it. “I cried.” “I cried.” “I cried.” I do not know a better form of prayer than crying. It implies that the whole nature is full of anguish. Crying is the consequence of pain. His entire soul was stirred up. A cry is the expression of desire. It is a natural unpremeditated utterance. There is no affectation about it. A man that knows no Latin or Greek can cry. He that cannot speak with eloquence may yet give eloquent vent to his feelings in tears and entreaties. Oh, there are some with whom prayer is a ceremony. They call the servants together—they march in, and they march out to the routine of family worship. They read out of a book some form of words, or else they compass a little piece, themselves, and say it—and that is their idea of prayer! Not so. Prayer is crying, laying hold on God and spreading our needs before Him with an earnest entreaty that He would not reject us, but would give us what we ask of Him. It is a wrestling with the Covenant Angel. It is a sacred resolve, “I will not let You go except You bless me.” If you want to conquer sin, know that it cannot be overcome by cold prayers, muttered in a heartless manner—it will not yield to empty ceremonies! Sin only flies before the blood of Christ and the power of the Eternal Spirit. These come to our rescue when, with cries and tears, we importune the Lord to help us. “I cried.” “I cried.” “I cried.” Thrice does he repeat the words. His whole heart cried to God that he might be delivered from sin!  
Wherever there is a real and true prayer about this matter, it must be a prayer of faith. God can, in answer to prayer, help me to conquer sin. Beloved, you pray in vain unless you steadfastly believe that there is no sin which you cannot overcome. I meet with men who say, “I can never give up drinking.” My dear Friend, God can make you! I meet with a man who has a violent temper and he thinks he can never curb or subdue it. Surely you do not think of taking it to Heaven with you! They have no passionate people in that happy clime. You will have to get that anger put away, but only God can accomplish it! Do you say, “It would be like turning a lion into a lamb”? That is just what His Grace is able to do! He can bring you from darkness to light. He can work such a transformation in you that you would not know yourself if you could see yourself after you have passed under the Divine hand. Resolve in your soul that sin must be conquered—believe that it is possible—and cry to God with a full conviction that He is able to save you from it! Yet I think there are some who would not like to have their prayers answered. They ask for a humble heart. Well, I question whether they would like it, if it were given to them—whether they would not want to send it back! They pray that they may have a pure conscience, but how, then, could they carry on that business of theirs? They ask that they may he upright in God’s statutes, but they know very well that they prefer following their own crooked devices! There are thousands of prayers that are insults to Heaven, but where the Spirit of God is really at work, the man who wants to be pure, prays sincerely, and cries mightily to God for purity! And nor will he be content to tolerate anything—either in his disposition or in his daily life— which would be inconsistent with the perfect holiness of God. Oh, that God might implant in all of us this desire and then set us a-praying that we might secure the blessing we crave! Now, secondly—  
II. THE MAN WHO DESIRES TO WALK IN GOD’S WAY NOT MERELY PRAYS, BUT HE RESOLVES.  
“I cried with my whole heart; hear me, O Lord. I will keep Your statutes.” He puts his whole heart into it. His prayer is no deceit. Then he throws that same heart into a strong resolution that he will find out what God’s statutes are and when he has found them, he will keep them, cost whatever it may! Need I say that nobody becomes holy against his will? No man keeps God’s statutes unless he exercises a resolve to do so. The very essence of obedience to God lies in the heart, so the heart must be set upon obedience! It must be a sincere, willing, cheerful obedience, or else it is not a genuine submission to the Almighty. Do I address anyone who is living in sin and yet saying, “I wish I could get rid of it”? I have often heard such a wish expressed by persons who must themselves have known that they were uttering a lie! A man says, “I wish I could be set free from sin tonight,” and tomorrow he will mix with evil associates and loose companions, and go to places of amusement where he is as sure he will be led into sin as he would be sure that his coat would burn if he put it into the fire! He goes into the middle of the mischief—he takes the tinder of his heart where he knows there are sparks, and he says, “There will come no harm of it.” He puts a candle near the gunpowder and he hopes he will not be blown away! That is what he says—but it cannot be so. If you do not want to be besmeared, do not go among the pitch and the tar. If you do not want to be defiled, avoid all ungodly fellowship. The man who means to conquer sin and resolves to conquer it, will keep himself out of mischief’s way, that he may be clean before the living God! Such a man will give up everything that tempts him. If there is anything in which he knows he has weak point, he will mortify himself rather than offend his conscience. He cuts off his right arm and plucks out his right eye, according to the Gospel, which means, I suppose, whatever he is fond of, if it becomes a temptation to sin, he will forthwith have done with it once and for all. It does not matter what it is—whether it is drunkenness or gluttony, or lust—whatever is his besetting sin! He just says, “No. This may be allowable to some men to go just so far, but I cannot go as far without going further. Therefore, I will have nothing to do with it.” He is ready to deny himself anything and everything. He completely reforms his habits, lest he should be led into sin. “I will keep Your testimonies.”  
Oh, what a blessed thing it is when a man really resolves to do this! When he says, “I will keep out of the way of temptation and I will deny myself that which tempts me, lest by any means I grieve the Holy Spirit of God,” he will be sure, if his resolution is of the true metal, to follow that which helps it. He knows that to hear the Gospel helps it—therefore, he will not waste the morning hours of the Lord’s-Day in slothful sleep, but he will welcome the assembly of the saints and rejoice in the preaching of the Word! He knows that reading good books will often be helpful to him, so he prefers them to light literature. He knows that association with Christian people will help him, so he likes to get among them. He knows that to lift up his heart in prayer to God, not occasionally, but regularly at set intervals, has often proved a help to him—and he accordingly endeavors to maintain such engagements as strictly as he finds it possible. If there is anything of good repute to help him to get rid of sin, he seeks after it! And when he prays to God to keep him pure, he takes care to choose all such means as God may put in his way to resist evil, and to follow after holiness!

Such a man will achieve his purpose. You may laugh at him for being too precise. His heart will not be wounded by your ridicule. He will lose the Sunday trade if, thereby, he loses half his living, rather than break God’s Command. It may be that his association with some worldly persons contributed much to his prosperity, though it involved him in serious temptations—he falters not, for he would sooner run the risk of losing all the world than stake his reputation, or jeopardize his soul, for he is bent upon getting rid of sin! Sin is the plague he hates! He would sooner be poor as Lazarus, and even covered with sores, and licked by dogs, than have the sins of the rich man upon him! He wants to be clean delivered from every foul being and every false way! One thing has he asked of the Lord, and that one thing has he set his heart upon—that he may possess himself in righteousness, that he may be without offense and that he may maintain his integrity. To obtain this, through the power of the Holy Spirit, being cleansed by the blood of Jesus, he will cheerfully suffer any imaginable privation!  
Do observe how David sought after a thorough allegiance and a perfect conformity to the will of God. He says, “I cried with my whole heart; I will keep Your statutes”—not some of the statutes that were agreeable to him, but all of the statutes that had the Divine sanction. I do not intend to be uncharitable when I suspect that some Christians do not wish to know too much, or to enquire too minutely into the Lord’s demands upon their resources. I have noticed a great many people lately who have looked upon perfection as a prize within their reach and even as an attainment to which they have already come! This is getting rather common. They profess to be perfectly sanctified. But what can I think of some of them who, to the best of my belief, are possessed of fortunes to the extent of two or three hundred thousand pounds? Were they perfectly sanctified, could they look on the outlying world, living in vice and ignorance, out of which a chosen people are being saved by the Gospel, without supporting those agents and agencies that have the Divine blessing manifestly resting upon them to the utmost of their ability? They should come nearer to the kind of consecration which was manifested in that poor widow who gave “all her living” to the Lord’s treasury! I do not believe in a perfect sanctification which allows a man to lay up so much treasure on earth, while so many works for the Lord Jesus need his help. Systematic hoarding of wealth, to my mind, does not indicate a perfect character! I am not judging ordinary Christians, but only those who talk of full consecration—and I will never believe in it till I see their gold, and their silver dedicated to a larger degree, yes, to a perfect degree! Do not let them boast, but give. As to those who are satisfied that they are perfect in spirit, soul and body, we wait for their last testament—to see what their wills look like when they die! A man who is perfect before the Lord lays out his substance for God’s cause, depend on that! He does not merely attend conferences, and talk of good things, of spirituality of mind and sanctification by faith, and all those glittering subjects, but he lives for Jesus in some practical work and gives himself up—and his substance, too—for the honor of the Redeemer’s name and the diffusion of the glorious Gospel! I have no leading one of these Brothers in my mind’s eye, but certain of their disciples—and I do not even condemn those—but I do ask them to reconcile their large wealth with their still larger professions of perfect consecration!  
The true seeker for holiness is one who, while he resolves on obedience to God, will dare to be singular, if no man will accompany him in it. “I cried with my whole heart: I will keep Your statutes.” He meant to do it, though he should be without companions. He was prepared to stand alone! I always admire that speech of Athanasius, when he, seeing others had turned aside to Arianism, said, “I, Athanasius, against the world.” He is a true man who can be a true man by himself! Give me no semidetached cottage, but a house that stands compact on its own foundation! And give me such a man as can let the wind blow all round him and yet stand upright. He will hold his own whether men will bear or forebear! Let his fellow creatures applause or hiss him, he will remain true to his own convictions. If they bear him on their shoulders in triumph, it is the truth he has espoused they honor—or if they trample him under their feet in contempt, it is for righteousness’ sake he suffers! But, like Luther, he will defy devil, death, and Hell to hold to his purpose to keep God’s statutes! Now the Word of God animates a man’s soul and the work of God is the enterprise of his life when this is the strong desire of his spirit. He prays to God and invokes His aid, yet at the same time he records his vow with a mind that is not given to vacillate. He has put his foot down where he meant to stand. He has knit his brow and closed his teeth and set all his features to the aspect of defiance, for he means to hold out till he achieves the victory! He is not going to compromise himself, nor to tolerate any wrong thing. He will foil temptation, master evil propensities and slay the sin that offends, and aggrieves, and harasses him! In the armor of God he arrays himself and, through the Grace of God, he will prevail!  
The man who is thus seeking purity, while he prays and resolves, if he is really wise and taught of the Spirit—  
III. WILL HAVE A DEEP SENSE OF HIS OWN WEAKNESS AND DEPRAVITY.  
Therefore, he supplicates the Lord in the language of the 146th verse— “I cried unto You; hear me; I shall keep Your testimonies.” His tender misgivings are an incentive to his restless importunities. As though he should say, “Oh, Lord, I am praying and resolving, but my prayers need Your answers, and my resolutions need Your might to fulfill them. My prayers—what are they? My resolves—what can they do? I am a frail leaf and I bend before the wind of temptation! My righteousness is like the sere leaf of autumn—it is soon carried away—yes, it is like a filthy rag that ought to be set aside and hidden from view! My God, I need sifting, I need sifting! Oh, save me, and then I shall keep Your testimonies.” There is no holiness in any man by nature and never will be! Some ingenious author has said that man is not dead like a stone, but dead like an egg. There was some disposition to life in him that needed brooding over to develop. Well, I should not like to be the hen that had to sit on that egg till it has hatched! That a long eternity of disappointed hopes would spread out before me, I am quite certain. It is a stone egg, this humanity of ours! There is no real spiritual life whatever in it. Who shall bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one. And they may sit on that unclean egg as long as they like, but a vile, unclean chick will be the only result of it. Before ever we can keep God’s testimonies, we must be saved! We must be saved, first, from the guilt of the past. By Substitution, by Redemption, by the application of the precious blood of Jesus, by that expiatory Sacrifice in which our blessed Lord bore for us the vengeance of God that was due to our sin, must our salvation be procured!  
Sinner, you will never go out of the Egypt of your bondage to sin till the blood of the Paschal Lamb has been sprinkled on the lintel and the two side posts. You may strive against sin as you will, but you will never overcome it except through the blood of the Lamb. Enquire of those in Heaven who have conquered sin and do now wear the snow-white garments—  
*“I asked them whence their victory came? They, with united breath,  
Ascribe their conquest to the Lamb,  
Their triumph to His death.”*  
Never till you see a bleeding Savior will you be able to put your sins to death! They must be crucified on the Cross. They will die nowhere else than there! “Save me, and I shall keep Your testimonies.”  
We need to be saved, however, not only from the guilt of sin, but saved from our sinful selves! We, whose nature is evil, cannot do much with so bad a nature to baffle all our efforts to cleanse our way. This nature must be removed and a new nature implanted, or else, while the old nature is extant, the old evil will assert itself! There are different ways of treating diseases. A man has a bad malady upon him and it breaks out in his flesh. He goes to a quack who gives him an ointment which he applies outwardly to heal the sore till the morbid appearance vanishes. And he congratulates himself on the cure and commends the charlatan for his skill. “What a capital doctor he is, and how well my money was expended,” he says, “he has taken away all that eruption.” By-and-by, the man is lying so grievously sick and ill that he does not know what to do. “Oh,” he thinks to himself, “have I made a mistake?” And when a true physician comes, he says, “What have been your symptoms?” He tells the tale of an eruption on his skin and the remedies he resorted to. “Ah,” says the physician, “the disease is driven inwards! You have taken the wrong course—your present symptoms are fatal. You will die. It was well that it should come out on your flesh, seeing it lurked in your constitution. When you have a disease, you had need lay the axe at the root, and not at the branches. It is not the disfigurement of the skin that is so alarming, as the blood-poisoning that caused it.” Forthwith he begins to deal with the real evil.  
So, my dear Friends, you are only tinkering with the symptoms, the mere eruption on the skin, while you aim at outward reformation! You must be born-again! That is the only cure for the leprosy of sin. I am glad to hear of people insisting on the importance of reforming every kind of vicious custom and evil habit, but they do not go to the root of the upas tree unless they resort to the Gospel—which lays the axe right at the root of all manner of sin and blasphemy with its imperative demand that you repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out! This is the vital and vitalizing process that will turn out to be a radical blessing. Lord, save me, save me! Change my heart! Renew my spirit! Make the fountain clean! Set the mainspring right! Oh, Holy Spirit, regenerate me! And if You do this, then, not till then, shall I keep Your testimonies!

The same is true in respect to every Christian, Beloved. We require God to keep on sifting us. Unless His spiritual work shall be carried on every day in us, we shall be unable to keep His testimonies. We are to be resolved against sin—I have told you that. We are to pray against it—I have enlarged upon that. Still, we must fall back upon the naked fact that a real conquest of sin is the work of God, Himself! “I cried unto You; hear me: I shall keep Your testimonies.”  
Brothers and Sisters, beloved in Christ, live near to God! Live at the foot of the Cross! Go every day to Jesus. Never get away from the spot on which you stood when you first believed. Then and there you looked, as sinners, to find everything in Him and nothing in yourselves. Do not expect to overcome sin by any other means but by faith in the atoning blood. Do not seek anything like perfection apart from Jesus Christ who, “is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” Oh, I would charge upon the members of this Church to labor after holy walking. It cuts me to the quick when I hear it said of any one of the members of this Church, “Well, they may be professors of religion, but they are not honest in their dealings, or they are not choice in their language, or they do not govern their tempers. They may be saints at the Prayer Meeting, but they are devils at home! They may look very amiable at the Communion Table, but they are very cross at their own tables.” Do not let it be so! Give no cause for such an evil report, I pray you! I invite all that attend my ministry, who are truly converted, to cast in their lot with us and join the Church, for so you ought to do, but oh, do not bring dishonor—I will not say upon us—that is of small consequence. Do not bring dishonor upon the Gospel that we preach and the Christ whom we love!  
The world will not say, “There, that is a false professor.” They ought to say it. And if they were honest, that is how they would put it, but, in general, they will say, “That is your religion!” And the Cross of Christ will be evilly spoken of and many a poor Believer who has trouble enough as it is, finds it more difficult to give an answer to the scoffer through having the inconsistencies of others thrown in his teeth. Better die than deny the Savior! Better that we lie sick at home, covered with boils, than that we go about the world grieving the Holy Spirit and putting an evil word into the mouth of the ungodly! Follow after holiness, I charge you. You are not saved by works! We give no uncertain sound about that teaching! We have told you and we constantly do tell you, that you are only to be saved by the blood of Jesus! But, remember, Jesus came to save us from our sins. If we hug our sins, we cannot have Christ for our Savior! Christ and you must part, unless you and your sins part. Jesus Christ will take any sinner to Heaven, but He will not take any sin to Heaven. He will spare the sinner, but He will not spare his sin! If you want to spare your own sins, depend upon it, you will lose your souls! Watch, I pray you, against what are called “little” sins! Remember, when thieves want to get into the house, if they cannot find a ready entrance, they will often put a child through a little window—and then he opens the front or the back door. So a little sin will often open the door to a big sin. Watch, I pray you—watch against secret sins! We have heard of some who barred the doors at night and fastened the windows, but there was a thief under the bed! Mind that it is not so with you—some hidden evil—some secret lust. Watch, pray, resolve, but still come back to this— “Lord, help me; Lord, save me; Lord, keep me.” The old plowman whom I sometimes used to talk with before he went to Heaven said to me, “Depend upon it, if you and I get one inch above the ground, we shall be that inch too high.” There is much truth in his plain remark. If we get any high notions of what we are, we shall soon sink below what we should be. Lie low! Aspire high! Be nothing! Take Christ to be your All-in-All! Renounce self-confidence and have faith in God! In this way you shall conquer sin, your prayers shall be accepted, your resolutions shall be carried out and the purpose of your heart shall be verified. “I will keep Your statutes.” May it be so with everyone of us! Amen, and amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 119:145-168.**

Verse 145. I cried with my whole heart: hear me, O LORD: I will keep Your statutes. In the time of trouble there is no resort like that of prayer, but it must be intense and earnest. “I cried with my whole heart.” And sometimes it should be accompanied with a resolve to profit by the affliction. “I will keep Your statutes.” As the child under the rod prays to be spared because he hopes in future to be obedient, so does the Psalmist here say, “Hear me, O Lord: I will keep Your statutes.” This ought to be the effect of every affliction—to make us more careful in our obedience. It is not always so, but so it ought always to be.

146. I cried unto You: save me, and I shall keep Your testimonies. As if he felt that the force of gratitude would compel him to obedience. He did not merely promise it, but he prophesied it as a matter of certainty that he would keep the Lord’s testimony.

147. I rise before the dawning of the morning, and cry for help. I hope in Your Word. Early prayers seem seasonable. Before we have gone into the world, should we not first go to our God? Prayer ought to be the key of the morning to open it, as well as the key of the night to close it. And notice what should always be associated with prayer, namely, hope. “I hope in Your Word.” There is no prayer like a hopeful prayer, in which a man hopes, believes, expects that God will send him a blessing!

148. My eyes are awake through the night watches, that I might meditate on Your Word. Before the watchman can cry the hour of night, my eyes are upon the Word of God, and I am studying it. Oh, it is well when we prove our love to the Word of God by our meditation upon it, our constant searching into it.

149. Hear my voice according unto Your loving kindness. Not according to my earnestness, much less according to my merit, but, “Hear my voice according to Your loving kindness.” Oh, what a large measure is this, for who can tell how boundless is the loving kindness of God? Such is the answer to my prayer, O my Lord.

149. O LORD, quicken me according to Your judgment. As You try me, quicken me. Just as You see I have need of it, give me more spiritual life.  
150. They draw near that follow after mischief: they are far from Your Law. Dogs are at my heels! I have heard them long ago pursuing me, but now they are getting nearer to me than ever.  
151. You are near, O LORD. Is not that a blessed sentence, that when the adversaries are near, the Friend of friends is near, too? What if he is like a hunted stag, and the dogs are at his heels, yet the Omnipotent Lord, the Interposer, can come between and save His darling from the power of the dogs!  
151, 152. And all Your commandments are truth. Concerning Your testimonies, I have known of old that You have founded them forever. It is an old story with me that Your love is without beginning, Your Covenant from all eternity, your Grace Immutable, not fickle, nor changeable as if it were founded yesterday upon the sand, but, “You have founded them forever.”  
153-155. Consider my affliction and deliver me: for I do not forget Your Law. Plead my cause and deliver me: quicken me according to Your Word. Salvation is far from the wicked: for they seek not Your statutes. If they sought that salvation, they would cease to be wicked—they would find salvation—but while they follow out their wicked ways, they get further and further away from anything like salvation.  
156-158. Great are Your tender mercies, O LORD: quicken me according to Your judgments. Many are my persecutors and my enemies; yet do I not decline from Your testimonies. I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not Your Word. It is enough to make any man grieve that the Word of God, which is so right, so just, so good, should be despised! What madness is this which is in the hearts of men, that they despise the best of the best?  
159. Consider how I love Your precepts: quicken me, O LORD, according to Your loving kindness. It is a fair argument. As one friend may say to another, “Consider how I love you.” As a child might say to his angry father when he is about to chasten him, “My father, I love you, although I have transgressed. Look at my heart and see how I love you, notwithstanding all the mistakes of my character and even the faults that I have committed.”  
160, 161. Your Word is true from the beginning: and every one of your righteous judgments endures forever. Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart stands in awe of Your Word. “Princes have persecuted me without a cause; but my heart stands in awe of”—them? No, but, “of Your Word.”  
162-166. I rejoice at Your Word, as one that finds great spoil. I hate and abhor lying: but Your Law do I love. Seven times a day do I praise You because of Your righteous judgments. Great peace have they which love Your Law: and nothing shall offend them. LORD, I have hoped for Your salvation, and done Your commandments. Present duty, future expectation. It is no use our hoping for great things unless we cultivate good things. God will make tomorrow bright—let us make today holy.  
167, 168. My soul has kept Your testimonies; and I love them exceedingly. I have kept Your precepts and Your testimonies: for all my ways are before You.

—Adapted from the C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #1641 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

GREAT SPOIL  
NO. 1641

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JANUARY 22, 1882, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
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**“I rejoice at Your Word, as one that finds great spoil.” Psalm 119:162.**

IN the preceding verse David had avowed his reverence for God’s Word in the following language—“My heart stands in awe of Your Word.” It is clear that holy awe is perfectly consistent with intense delight. Fear seems to stand far apart from joy and yet, in the experience of the child of God, they are next of kin. We are familiar with combinations such as this— “They returned from the sepulcher with fear and great joy.” “Happy is the man that fears always.” “Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling.” These two emotions are like two notes which, apart, are widely different, but sound harmoniously together—the one is far down and the other is high up in the scale—but they melt into one with sweet accord in the experience of God’s people. It is a blessed thing both to reverence the Word of God and to have an intense joy in it. May we all know what the mixed emotion means.

More than this, I will go the length of saying that unless we do have deep awe of the Word, we shall never have high joy over it. Our rejoicing will be measured by our reverence. If I think upon the Bible, as some seem to do, as though it were an ordinary piece of literature, I shall have no very special joy in it. Or if I rise no higher than many critics of the present day and conceive the Holy Book to be, in a certain sense, Inspired, but still to be marred with imperfection and open to rectification by the growing intelligence of the age—if I have such small reverence for the Word of God, I shall have a correspondently little joy in it.

A man rejoices in gold rather than in clay because the gold is more precious and, as the treasure rises in value, so his delight in it will rise. The more, then, we think of the Scriptures, the greater will be our delight in them if we see that they relate to us. “Your Word is very pure: therefore Your servant loves it.” If they become to us the Infallible voice of Truth, that pure light which never misleads, that metal which is entirely free from alloy—then will our joy in Holy Writ overflow as we read in it the mind and will of our Father in Heaven! And then shall we borrow the language of the Psalmist, saying first, “My heart stands in awe of Your Word,” and next, “I rejoice at Your Word, as one that finds great spoil.”

Observe, dear Friends, concerning this joy of David in the Word of God which he reverenced, that he expresses it with a martial figure. My text is quite a soldierly verse—“I rejoice at Your Word, as one that finds great spoil.” It is a figure taken from men of war who, after they have overcome their enemy, divide the plunder among them. This expression is most natural as coming from David. David had been a soldier from his youth up and he knew personally and literally what it was to divide the spoil and, therefore, he did not go far to find his metaphor, but plucked it from the garden of his own life! How I like to hear men both in prayer and praise speak like themselves!

I notice that if a sailor has been converted to God, he can, in cool blood, utter proper sentences, such as one might borrow from collects and forms of prayer. But if his soul grows warm within him, he ceases to speak according to the books and begins to pray like an “ancient mariner.” When he breaks through the bonds of restraint and gets quite free, he takes you among the rolling billows and many of his expressions have a salt spray upon them, possibly also a suspicion of yarn and pitch! You soon find that you have fallen in with a shipmate whose soul has done business on the great waters.

So must it be with the soldier. If cold, dead propriety rules him, you will not know whether he is a soldier or a citizen. But let him grow enthusiastic! Let his very heart speak out and his speech betrays him! Wars and rumors of wars are in his utterances. He sings and prays to martial music! Therefore I like to hear David saying that his heart rejoices at God’s Word as one that finds great spoil, for it is his own manner of speech and sounds fitly from a warrior! Do not cut away the naturalness of yours utterances in prayer—never grow so strictly proper as to pray like somebody else. You may take a bird and teach it to pipe half-a-dozen set notes and it will be thought to be a wonder—but no piping bullfinch in the world, to my ear, sings so sweetly as the finches in my own garden, whose wild songs are all their own.

The labored notes of the trained bird’s little tune may be remarkable, but are they not also somewhat grotesque and unnatural? The notes of Nature more truly reveal the bird and are a fitter utterance for it than the ditty it has learned so painfully. It is a pity that men should speak with God in a constrained and artificial style—it far more befits them to pray in their own natural manner! If you are farmers, or artisans, or laborers, be not ashamed that your speech should savor of yours calling. If you are soldiers, pray like soldiers! Let your true selves speak out when you speak with God, for He is Truth, itself, and needs not that you put on artificial manners in His Presence!

Having thus prefaced my discourse, I come to look into this joy of David over God’s Word which he compares to the joy of a warrior when he finds great spoil. To such overflowing joy we are not strangers—we feel quite at home with the text.

I. Let me first observe that THIS GREAT JOY IS SOMETIMES AROUSED BY THE FACT THAT THERE IS A WORD OF GOD. This is true if we regard the Scriptures as a revealing of God. After going up and down in the world searching after Deity, it is a great delight to come upon a Book in which the one only living and true God has unveiled Himself to those who care to behold Him. It is a great “find” for a man to discover that, after all, he is not left in a fog to grope his way, but that God has kindled a sun that honest hearts may walk in the light of and in that light see all things clearly. I say that a Revelation of God is a great discovery over which a man rejoices “as one that finds great spoil.” For, dear Friends, there can be no revealing of God except by God Himself.

The Apostle Paul tells us very truly that the things of a man know no man but the spirit of a man that is in him. You cannot read a man until that man brings out somewhat from within and thus reveals himself. A man must speak, or act, or we cannot know his mind. The chief means of a man’s revealing himself is by his word—language is the gate of the soul. If the man is true and honest, his word will be a window through which you may see his mind. Even so, says the Apostle, as the heart of a man is only known to the man, himself, so the things of God knows no man but the Spirit of God. The Divine thought must be hidden in the heart of God forever until the Spirit of God is pleased to tell it to us.

There is, therefore, an absolute necessity for a Revelation, since none can, by searching, find God. This written Word is the Revelation of God and when the Spirit of God shines upon it, we see the Lord as in a mirror. Oh, but what a blessing that the Spirit of God should still be with His people, bearing witness with the Word of God which He has of old Inspired! What a comfort that we have this sure Word of Testimony in which God has spoken to us in terms so distinct, so clear, so unquestionable! He who feels the power of this Revelation in his own soul may well rejoice “as one that finds great spoil.”

Nor does our valuation of Holy Scripture depend upon this one view of it, for we also prize it as the guide of our life. Often we come to positions in which we know not which way to take. It is a great discomfort to have to be questioning, questioning and forever questioning! To hear within the soul the enquiries, “How?” “What?” “Which?” “When?” and to be confused by dubious voices is a great affliction—suspense is killing. How delightful to turn over the sacred page and find in them a guide like that of the Urim and Thummim of old! This Book tells us the right and bids us follow it! It teaches us the way of wisdom and the path of understanding and it supplies motives for walking in them. Submitting ourselves to the Spirit of God, we hear Him speak in this volume and say, “This is the way, walk you in it.”

As a bewildered wanderer in a forest hails the light in a cottage window, hoping to find a guide there to set him on his homeward path, so do we hail the light of Holy Writ which shines in a dark place. As the mariner prizes his chart and compass, so do we welcome the Law of the Lord. Tossed on the changing sea of life, our eyes are gladdened by the clear ray of this pole-star of Heaven, the fixed Light of God! If we had been left to blind reason, we would soon have stumbled into the ditch—but with Inspiration to conduct us, we have a plain path before us and we are glad. No longer in a perpetual quandary, guessing and surmising, the way of life is definitely mapped out for us and we pursue our route with confidence, knowing that, “Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the Law of the Lord.” This becomes our daily song, “You shall guide me with Your counsel, and afterward receive me to Glory.” O happy man that finds such sure direction as this! He can rejoice “as one that finds great spoil.” More than this, if you think of it, dear Friends, a word from God apprehended in the soul is a sure pledge of mercy. Consider what words those Words of God are—how full of love, Grace and tenderness. I will not stay to quote the exceedingly great and precious promises, for they are, I hope, your daily food. You know what great things the Lord has spoken concerning you. But here is a thought worth pondering—these promises are backed by the Word of God—no, they are, each one, the Word of God! When a man has given his word, if he is an upright, honorable man, there is an end to further questions—he has pledged his word and that is enough. Now the Lord has given to His people His Word—His right honorable Word that cannot be broken—which must stand fast forever and ever. Happy are those who are willing to take God at His Word and accept His promise as the equivalent for the thing promised, for what the Lord has promised He will surely perform!

When a man grasps a promise of forgiveness, of acceptance in prayer, of sanctifying Grace, of daily Providence, of Divine anointing, of comfort in death, or of eternal Glory, he may well rejoice “as one that finds great spoil.” Within the Word of promise there lies the blessing, itself! The Word is to the apprehension of faith, the substance of the thing hoped for. That which is guaranteed by God—who cannot lie—is already ours! Well may he rejoice that finds it! Notice, still further, that Holy Scripture, when it comes to us with power as the Word of God, is the beginning of communion with God. It will strike you in a moment that when the Lord speaks to a man, communion has, in a measure, begun.

It may be that God speaks to a deaf ear, but even then it shows great goodness and condescension on God’s part that He should speak to men at all, and especially to those who refuse to hear Him! But oh, if you actually hear the voice of God in His Word—if it sinks into your soul by the accompanying power of the Holy Spirit—what remains, then, but for you to answer the Lord and to let Him speak again? This Bible talks—“When you awake, it shall talk with you.” This is God’s side of a heavenly conversation which ought to be kept up throughout all the days of our pilgrimage. God says this and that in the Word and we in prayer, in faith, in holy action reply to Him—and then He speaks again and we answer Him again.

When you are alone and wish to have communion with God, you probably begin with prayer. Do so. But sometimes you feel that you cannot pray. Very well, do not try. Say, “I desire to converse with God but if I cannot speak I will listen to Him speak.” Get down the Bible. Read a Psalm, or some precious portion of Holy Writ, and after God has thus spoken to you, the conversation has begun! God’s Words will suggest heart-words with which you can speak to the Most High. If it does not, read some more, till at last, within your spirit there is communion with the Eternal One. Oh, what a bliss it is that God does speak to any of us— to me—a poor, worthless, sinful creature! How highly favored is man to have a word from the great King!

Many would give their eyes to be spoken to by a monarch, but here we are spoken to daily by the King of kings if we are but willing to incline our ear to His sweet voice! And this is the commencement of a communion which may continue throughout life and consummate itself in everlasting Glory! Personally I can, sometimes, realize my text in a peculiar sense, when the Word of God becomes to me the instrument of usefulness. How often do I look around me anxiously for the next theme of discourse! My mind enquires, What shall I preach to the people? What shall be my message? With what shall I feed my Church? This is a trying question after 28 years preaching to one congregation!

At last a passage comes home to my soul with power. I have found it. What joy fills the preacher’s heart! No warrior was ever happier when he heaped up the mountains of prey. You meet with a person who is anxious—you want to say the right Word of God to him and, therefore, you prayerfully look all around until a text suggests itself, which proves to be the exact word for the person whose good you are seeking! Have you not felt great joy in handling such a passage as the instrument of usefulness? Have you not been ready to cry like the old Greek philosopher, “I have found it! I have found it!”? Have you not wanted to be off to tell it not only to the one person you are anxious about, but to 50,000 more?

Ah, yes, you have rejoiced as one that finds great spoil. You see, then, that there is a distinct a joy which comes to the man who gets God’s Word into his soul—a joy which arises out of the fact that there is a Word of God which comes to us as the Revelation of God, as an Infallible Guide through life, as the pledge of Divine mercy, the beginning of Divine communion and the instrument of usefulness! Upon all these things we might profitably enlarge, but time would not allow it, so I beg you to follow me to the next point. May the Holy Spirit lead our minds.

II. Secondly, let us remark that FREQUENTLY THE JOY OF THE BELIEVER IN THE WORD ARISES OUT OF HIS HAVING HAD TO BATTLE TO OBTAIN A GRASP OF IT. Read the text again—“I rejoice at Your Word, as one that finds great spoil.” Covered with sweat, dirty with dust, bleeding from many a wound, wearied and faint, the fighting man has conquered the enemy and now he staggers forward to seize his portion of the prey, finding new strength in the joy of victory. Did you ever have to do that with God’s Word, for I have had to do many times, and I will try to describe the battle as I know it.

“O my Soul, you have trod down strength.” We have had to fight over certain doctrines before we could really come at them. Learning doctrines out of books, or merely learning them as matters of catechism, is never enough. Such teaching is all very useful and helpful, but the sure way to learn a doctrine is to have it burned into your soul as with a hot iron. “Oh,” they say of me, “that man speaks so dogmatically.” I cannot help it! Why should I speak with bated breath when I feel absolutely certain of what I say? If I were not certain, I would hold my tongue until I was. I could not dare to come here to talk of matters which may or may not be true! I dare not thus waste your time and thought. I have not only found the Doctrines of the Gospel in God’s Word, but I have tested and tried them in my own experience—and they have been so powerfully operative upon my own soul that I must speak as I find.

To me the things I preach are as assured as my existence! In fact, they are a part of my existence, since they are my life, my hope, my joy and strength. I am positive in speech because I am assured in mind. Nor can I see the gain which would accrue from the opposite style of speech. Of what use is this cloudy doubt? Unless a man speaks up to the best of his knowledge and belief, most positively, who is likely to believe him? Wise men will bid the speaker make up his own mind before he can hope to influence other minds. I have no doubt about the existence of a God. Have you? If you have, do not set up to be a minister for God by any manner of means!

I have no doubt about the mediatorial power of His precious blood. Have you? If you have, do not pretend to be a Christian teacher, for your whole weight will be on the wrong side! Faith receives more stabs from waverers than from avowed skeptics. Sowers of doubt are no friends to the Gospel, for men are saved by faith—nobody was ever saved by unbelief. “We know and have believed the love which God has towards us.” “I believed, therefore have I spoken.” But how do we get to this assurance? Why, by fighting our way to it! A doctrine of God’s Word comes before us. Our heart exclaims, “Yes, this seems to be the teaching of Scripture and, therefore, I must believe it.” But carnal reason rebels and conjures up a phalanx of difficulties, while our proud human nature revolts from a Truth of God which is so little to its taste. These things have to be battled with.

Faith has to bring all the faculties of the children of God upon their knees and to say to them, “Be quiet! Listen while God speaks—let God be true and every man a liar, and every faculty in the man a liar, too—sooner than God be distrusted.” This is the victory we have to strive after—the triumph of a firm belief in the veracity of God. A doubt rises, then another and another, like a flight of bats when a dark cave is startled by the blaze of torches. Away they fly and light seizes on their dreary realm! Some minds have, for a time, to contend with doubts, army after army. Do not wonder if you have to strive, even, to blood, till your very soul bleeds over the doctrine! But rejoice that when once you thus win it, you will doubt no more and the Truth of God will become doubly precious to you ever afterwards!

You have gained the Truth by fighting for it and, therefore, you cry, “This is my spoil and none shall rob me of it.” Take away the giant’s head from David? He is not to be so defrauded! Did he not cut it off himself? Did he not throw the stone which sank into the Philistine’s forehead? So when a man has slain a thousand doubts in conflict over a doctrine and has, at last, come to assured belief, straightway he rejoices “as one that has found great spoil.” What a fight there is, sometimes over a promise. Have you ever entered into such a contest? O gracious promise, most suitable to my case! How it would comfort my soul! But may I appropriate it? The devil says, “Certainly not!” He pushes us back from it. Our feeble hope assures us that it is too good to be true to us.

A thousand doubtful suggestions assail us, till at last the soul, by a desperate effort, seizes the portion and holds it against all comers. We drive out the Canaanites, though they have chariots of iron! We take possession of their strongholds. Then does a man rejoice over a promise when he has believed it in the teeth of a thousand improbabilities and proved it to be true! He feels that he took the blessing out of the hand of the Amorite with his sword and with his bow, and from now on it is a peculiar portion to his soul and he rejoices over it, “as one that finds great spoil.” It is a good thing to mark your Bibles when you have received a promise. Mark the margin with T and P—and let it stand for “tried and proved.” Mark the passage which the Lord fulfils to you with some private seal, bearing witness to its truth!

David set his own hand to the margin in many places as, for instance, when he exhorted us to wait on the Lord and then added, “Wait, I say, on the Lord.” May that which is written with ink in the Bible be written with Grace on our hearts! May the public promise become a private promise to each one of us by the living experience of our own soul! Sometimes the hardest fight is round a precept. God has bid us do this and that, but carnal ease cries, “Let the precept alone!” And love of self says, “That command is too humbling! Pass it by.” But oh, when you can battle with yourself and win the victory till your heart cries, “I will delight myself in Your Commandments, which I have loved,” then your rejoicing will be great, indeed! What a joy to conquer yourself! What bliss to master your surroundings and all the peculiarities of yours disposition and temperament, so as to come to love the same precept which a little while ago was irksome! How the Believer loves the Law when he has fought down his rebellious will, vanquished his obstinacy, crushed his pride, fettered his levity and yielded himself wholly to the Word of the Lord! Holy Spirit, give us this joy!

A sharp warfare often goes on over the threats. I have had many a wrestling match over them. A voice whispers in my ear, “that threat of God is too severe! That sentence of Scripture is too harsh.” Certain of my Brethren carry a bit of pumice stone with them and rub down the rough texts. Whenever they find God speaking in wrathful indignation against sinners, they meet His terrors with a “larger hope.” Things that are revealed belong to me, but things that are not revealed seem to belong to them! They have many learned ways of softening down disagreeable Truths of God. Now, if I find my mind quarrelling with any line of Scripture, I say to my soul, “You are wrong, or else you would be in accord with every Word of the Judge of all the earth.” If I cannot yield unfeigned assent and consent to the justice of God, it does not occur to me to alter the Scripture, but to school my own heart till it bows before the thunder of Divine judgment!

I try to get my heart into such a state that I can say, “If my soul were in God’s place, this is exactly what I would say to the ungodly! This is precisely the measure I would deal out. For it must be right, it must be just or Jehovah would not so deal with men.” When you are thus agreed with God, you will rejoice as one that finds great spoil, for you will be confident that to the toughest problems there is a gracious answer—and for the direst difficulties a sweet solution! It is hazardous to take the soul out of texts of Scripture and to attempt to give them souls of our own invention! Let us learn God’s meaning and then become friends with it. Grow accustomed to the terrible texts till, like Daniel, you feel safe even in the lions’ den! The doctrine of Eternal Punishment is no longer difficult for me to believe since I am confident that it is taught in the Scriptures. The difficulties of it are for God to solve and there I leave them, being well assured that in some way, or other, all that He does will be consistent with His justice and His love! Not without a battle does one consent unto the darker side of sacred Writ, but that once fought, there is rest.

Yet, once more, this is true about the Word which reveals Christ. We know not Christ aright till we are conformed to what we know of Him. If Christ is lovely, we shall not understand that loveliness till we are, in a measure, lovely ourselves. The pure in heart see the pure and holy God because every man sees what he is. When the lady said to Mr. Turner, “Sir, I have seen that spot many times, but I never saw that which you have pictured.” “No, Ma’am,” he replied, “I dare say you have not. But don’t you wish you could?” Just so, the artist’s eye sees what another eye cannot—and the pure in heart see in God what nobody else can see because they are like God. When our minds become molded like the mind of Christ, then we understand Christ! If there is anything about the Character of our Divine Exemplar which staggers us, let us pray our way into it!

We must get to be like He and, oh, when we do, then every line of that dear face will be conspicuously and transcendentally charming to us because we have come to it through suffering! The inner experience of many a child of God lies much in conflict and contention—and scarcely an inch of Scripture is truly gained without fighting for it foot to foot with those who would rob us of our inheritance! Canaan was given to Israel by the Lord, Himself, by a Covenant of Salt, but we all remember the long list of enemies that already occupied it. What is the name of them? Hivites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites—I will not trouble you with more, so many and so ugly are the names of those who would keep back the Believer from his portion in the Covenant. One of old said, “They compassed me about like bees: like bees they compassed me about” and yet he added, “But in the name of the Lord will I destroy them.”

May it be our resolve that we will take every part of the Word of God to be our heritage and rejoice over it “as one that finds great spoil.”  
III. We shall now tarry a moment upon a third thought which is altogether different from that which has gone before. AT TIMES THE JOY OF THE BELIEVER LIES IN ENJOYING GOD’S WORD WITHOUT ANY FIGHTING AT ALL. In the text I am not sure that fighting is certainly mentioned or necessarily implied, though it is highly probable. David says, “I rejoice at Your Word, as one that finds great spoil,” as if he fell upon it all of a sudden, like the lepers at the gate of Samaria who, to their surprise, found all the way they traversed covered with garments, gold and silver vessels! They had not lifted a finger in war, yet they found great spoil—like the man in the parable who, when he was plowing, found a treasure hidden in the field. He had never looked for it, but he had great joy in discovering it.  
In infinite mercy the Lord makes His Word open up before His people when they are not seeking it, according to the promise, “I am found of them that sought Me not.” Have you ever experienced what this means and have you not rejoiced as one that suddenly finds spoil? The Word of the Lord is often as spoil found, not fought for. The promise lies before me on the way and I find it—and by the Law of the Kingdom of Grace it becomes mine for the finding. There it is and the Spirit of God reveals it to me! And I take it, asking no leave whatever, since all Covenant blessings are free to us when we are free to take them. Our warrant for feeding at the banquet of love is the fact that God has set before us an open door and we are invited to enter in! What joy is this!  
This spoil, however, must have cost somebody else most dear, though it has cost us nothing. If we did not fight for it, somebody else fought for it once. Ah, what a fight was that! Let Gethsemane and Calvary tell. What joy there is in seizing the spoil which Jesus has left us as the result of His life’s warfare! We have not trod the winepress, but yet we drink the wine! The blessing is free to us, but it cost Him groans, tears, bloody sweat and death! “This is David’s spoil.” Look down and see the mark of the victor’s feet! See you not where the nails went in? The Crucified One has been here and smitten all our adversaries and left this spoil for us poor creatures to divide among ourselves! Great is the spoil—all the spoils of death and Hell! All that father Adam was robbed of is recovered from the robbers! Life, light, peace, joy, holiness, immortality, Heaven—all these are brought back by our great Conqueror who has taken the prey from the mighty and brought back the lawful captives, leading captivity captive!  
O, Brothers and Sisters, we rejoice when we get a hold of the precious treasures of the Word as Jesus Christ’s spoil, fought for by Himself and then distributed to us! What a joy there is in our heart when we remember what foes our Lord overcame to gain all this spoil for us! Sin has been routed, Death has been slain and Hell has been stripped of its prey—our direst enemies are broken in pieces and the crown of their head is crushed by Him who is the Seed of the woman—the Messiah of God! Whenever a passage of Scripture sings to you of itself, sing with it before the Lord! Whenever in reading, the verse seems to leap out of the page into your bosom—there let it lodge forever! Whenever in hearing the Word of God it darts into your heart, then will you understand what David meant when he said that his soul rejoiced over God’s Word “as one who,” by a happy, blessed find, “finds great spoil.”  
IV. My fourth head is the principal one and I need all your attention while I dwell on it for a short time. THERE IS A JOY ARISING OUT OF THE VERY FACT THAT HOLY SCRIPTURE MAY BE CONSIDERED TO BE A SPOIL. I will show you that in five particulars. First, a spoil is the end of the uncertainty. Whenever a fight begins, it is questionable who will win. While it rages, the result still hangs quivering in the balances, but we know who has won the battle when the victor begins to divide the spoil. No question now remains—the debate is ended. Blessed is that man who has found in Scripture a spoil in the sense that he has come to the end of uncertainty and arrived at something without doubt.  
All men that think crave after certainty and gradually settle down to one standard or another. I have heard of two brothers, equally honest and thoughtful men, who commenced life at the same point, but parted in their search after a foundation firm and strong. One of them, at last, gravitated to the church of Rome, for he thought he discovered certainty in an historical church and in one at the head of it whose utterances are regarded as infallible. I do not envy him his ideal certainty—it seems to me to be a mass of fraud—a great historical imposture. The other brother found his resting place in his own reason, or in the fact that he could not be sure of anything. There is a certainty in being certain that you are not certain of anything—but certainly it is not a certainty which would afford comfort to me—for my reason would be to me a sorry guide for eternal things, since even in everyday concerns it has misled me!  
We must find certainty somewhere, or believe that we have found it, or else we shall be, of all men, most miserable. If a man has no standard of infallibility outside, he tries to find it in himself and becomes his own pope—and depend upon it, a pope in England is as likely to err as a pope in Rome! I would not give two pence for the two of you and if I threw myself in, it would not add an extra farthing to the value. When a man has in experience fought up to confidence in the Word of the Lord, or has had it effectually laid home by the Holy Spirit to his own soul, then he reaches the end of the controversy so far as he, himself, is concerned—he is dividing the spoil, for he says—“We have known and believed the love which God has towards us.”  
Of course, people come round and say, “You are mistaken.” Our answer is, “Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. It may not be certainty to

 you, but it is to me.” If a man should assert, “Oh, that medicine is all quackery,” he has a right to speak his mind, but his decision is not final. “Not so,” cries another, “I have been ill half-a-dozen times and on each occasion I have speedily recovered through its use! Call it quackery if you like, it is no quackery to me, at any rate, for I am certain about its good effects.” So is it when a man has, at last, by the application of the Spirit of God, felt the power of God’s Word over his soul. He says, “I am not going to fight that battle again. I am sure of the Truth of that Scripture.” Such a man is restful about that matter.  
I would to God that all of you had this certainty as some of us have. How horrible it is to grope in the eternal fog, to flounder in primeval chaos seeing no road or landmark; turning this way and finding it night and the other way equally darkness; to the right, disorder; to the left, questions! Oh, to get to know that God loves me and that I love God! To know that Christ has redeemed me, my sin is put away and to feel all this witnessed in my soul by the Holy Spirit! This is to rejoice in the end of uncertainty as one that divides the spoil!  
The next idea that comes out of the figure of spoil is this. It is the weakening of the adversary for any future attacks, for when they divide the spoil they say to one another, “The invaders will be here again, no doubt, before long, but they will not have this great gun to turn upon us— we have spiked it. Their stock of ammunition will be somewhat diminished by the capture of their magazines and they will not have this huge chest of gold with which to purchase more martial equipment, for we have taken it from them. We have weakened the adversary. Have we not entered their strongholds? Have we not captured their quadrilateral? They may again take up arms, but their force is broken.”  
Every doubt a man conquers by resting on the Infallible Word of God has weakened the power of unbelief within him and strengthened his faith. Blessed is that man who has so trusted in his God that doubts are now but as the grasshopper which is only a burden to the feeble. O the joy of saying, “I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him.” Or to cry with the onceblind man, “One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see!” Tasting and handling of the good things of the Kingdom of God, we rise into a region of fact and leave suppositions and quibbles far below! In this lies a part of the joy of taking the spoil—we hope for less disturbance of heart, less peril of intellect, less struggle of soul from this time forth. The horns of the adversary have been broken and they cannot harm us as before.  
Next, in dividing the spoil there is always a sense of victory and so there is in believing God’s Word. In getting firm hold upon the faithful Testimony of our God, we achieve a conquest over doubts, fears, disquietudes and all our proud judgments of God. There is a sense of conquest when we overcome our passions and propensities and do the Lord’s bidding according to His precepts and statutes. When that which at one time was difficult, if not impossible, becomes easy and delightful, then we wave the palm branch over a defeated enemy! When the mind is brought into subjection to all and every revealed Truth of God, then have we done more than if we had taken a strong city! “This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.” May we have more of it and go from strength to strength, doing valiantly in the name of the Lord!  
Again, in dividing the spoil there is profit, pleasure and honor. I am not about to justify the deeds of war, for these I hate—as to plunder and chaos, such as have been indulged in by the general run of conquerors— they are detestable crimes! Men have made themselves worse than devils to men. No calamities have ever befallen nations that are so much to be deplored as the atrocities of war! I use the warlike metaphor, but condemn the fact! Men conceive, when they divide the spoil, that there is honor in it. Look at the crowds that gathered along the Via Sacra when the Roman conquerors came down from the Apian Way, passed under the arch and marched towards the capitol! Then did the populace crowd the house roofs and the chimney tops that they might see a Scipio or a Caesar expose his captives and display his spoils.  
They shouted till they were hoarse and wearied themselves with applause at the sight of the spolia opima which were borne in the procession. Thus men judge of plunder in war. See how Napoleon thought to glorify himself by placing in Paris the works of art which he had taken from the capitals of Europe! What are most trophies but stolen goods, or that which is purchased by them? But when you and I lay hold of Holy Scripture, then have we grasped a prey more precious than royal treasures, a prey which we may hold with justice and honor! When we can say that the things which God has revealed are ours, then we are rich beyond a miser’s dream and when we can hold them against all comers! Then that which we believe becomes our honor and gives glory to us and glory to faith and chief glory to Him who worked our faith in us by His almighty Spirit!  
Last of all, the spoil is a prophecy of rest and so is that delightful dividing up of the Word of God and the appropriation thereof by faith. “Ah,” said the Romans when they spoiled old Carthage, “we shall never see another Hannibal at our gates, nor dread the ships of Carthage in our seas.” They had overcome their most potent adversary when they utterly spoiled her—and then they looked for a long period of peace. And that is the joy of receiving the Word of God! When we can believe that Jesus took our sin and suffered for them on the tree, we are no more troubled as to the guilt of sin! When we believe that our heavenly Father overrules all things for the good of His people, then sorrow and sighs, fear and frets flee away! Well may he rest who sees even evil made to work for his good!  
When we believe that Jesus died and rose again from the dead, then the fear of death which haunts so many receives its mortal wound. Knowing the meaning of the word, “He that believes in Me, though he were dead yet shall he live,” the dread of death has no more dominion over us! The appropriation of the Divine promise, as the soldier appropriates his share of the booty, is to us the prophecy that the war is over! We may rest, now, and be quiet. And oh, what joy, what blessedness is this! How I would that all those who are here present were believers in my Master—first in Jesus the great Incarnate Word—and then in this book, the written Word of God and that you did not only believe these things to be true, but took them to yourselves as warriors take the spoil!  
Happy and blessed would you be and your rejoicing this day would be as the joy of harvest, or as the shouting of them that divide the spoil! God grant it may be so, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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THE LOVER OF GOD’S LAW FILLED WITH PEACE  
NO. 2004

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S DAY MORNING, JANUARY 22, 1888, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Great peace have they which love Your Law: and nothing shall offend them.” Psalm 119:165.**

THIS forms part of a devotional passage. It is not merely a statement that great peace comes to those who love the Law of God, but it is uttered as part of a hymn of praise unto the Lord. We cannot praise God better than by stating facts concerning Him and His Word. If you desire to praise God, you must speak of Him as He is. If you would pour out an acceptable libation before Him, you must fill the vessel from Himself, as the wellhead of all excellence. Our Te Deums are simply declarations of what God is— there can be no higher praise. His praises can only be the reflection of His own light. All glory is already in Him, none can be added to Him.

And so, when we are adoring Him for His Law and blessing Him for giving us His Word, we cannot do better than observe how that Law operates upon the heart and praise Him because it so works. We have no need to heap up flattering titles as men do with their kings. We have no need to invent exaggerated expressions. We have but to speak the simple Truth concerning our God and we have praised Him. By the word, “Law,” here is intended, not only the Law of the Ten Commandments but the whole of Divine Revelation, as it was in David’s time and as it is now. Whatever God has revealed is loved by saintly men.

This sacred Book, which we commonly call the Bible, contains the mind of God so far as He has seen fit to reveal it to men. It is the Law of holiness as the guide of our actions and the Law of faith by which we receive of His Divine Grace. Here we have the Law of the kingdom of Heaven, the Law of life in Christ Jesus. As a Law of works, this holy Book convicts us of sin. As a Law of love it leads us to Jesus, to find forgiveness through His blood. In David’s day the Law was a smaller Book than ours but he found great peace in the reading of it—it was even then competent for the highest spiritual ends. We have that Book at greater length but it is one and the same.

The same Gospel is in Genesis as in Matthew. The Old Testament was perfect in itself as the Law of the Lord and the New Testament is but an expansion of the same Truth which the Old contains. We rejoice to find that our larger edition of the Word of God contains nothing which lessens that great peace which the earlier Scriptures were able to produce. As the light is clearer, the joy is brighter and the reasons for great peace are more clearly seen.

God’s Law comprises all His precepts and in keeping these we have peace of conscience. It contains all His promises and these are our great peace in the hour of need. And it comprehends all those great doctrines which surround the Cross of Christ and the Covenant of Grace and each one of these is a fountain of peace to our hearts. We take this Book as a whole and in this way we have peace. We dare not rend it, we would not leave out any part of it lest we miss the blessed effect which, as a whole, it is calculated to produce. Sitting as learners at the feet of Jesus our Master, submitting our hearts and minds to the infallible teaching of the Holy Spirit who leads us into all Truth, we find that the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keeps our hearts and minds by Christ Jesus.

Three things in the text are worthy of earnest attention. May the Spirit of God bless all we say! First, here is a spiritual character—“they which love Your Law.” Secondly, here is a special possession—“great peace have they.” And thirdly, here is a singular preservation—“nothing shall offend them”—or nothing shall be a stumbling block to them. Oh, that we may know our text experimentally!

I. First, here is A SPIRITUAL CHARACTER—“they which love Your Law.” Love lies deep—it is in the heart—it is not a thing of the surface, it is of the man’s own self. As a man loves so is he. To love God’s Law is to have the very nature and essence of our manhood in a right condition. To love the Word is something more than to read it, even though we should study it day and night. It is more even than to understand it. For the cold light of the intellect is of little worth compared with the warm sunlight of love. Many, no doubt, perceive the Truths which are taught in God’s Word and so become orthodox in their professed creed.

But without love their faith is dead. You cannot learn the Law of God as you learn the laws of nature. Your heart must be affected by it and you must obey it in your life or you do not truly know it. Only he who does the will of God can know of the doctrine. Mere knowledge brings no peace to the man. The Truth must go from the head to the heart before its power is known. Some even try to keep the Law of the Lord so far as to make the outward life conformable to morality and religion. But this falls far short of the love of the heart. To stand in slavish fear and dread of God is better than to be utterly indifferent but it is a poor thing compared with love.

Slaves obey their masters because of the lash and so do many outwardly follow the Word because of the spirit of bondage which will not permit them to rebel. But there is something lacking—nothing in religion is sound till the heart goes with it. God says, “My son, give Me your heart,” and He cannot be satisfied with anything short of it. Search, then, my Hearers and see if you really love the Law of the Lord.

He who loves the Word would not wish to have it altered, enlarged, or diminished—it reveals enough for him and no more. For he is content with what God chooses to teach him. If he finds any want of conformity in his own thoughts to God’s thoughts, he throws his own thoughts away and sets up the Divine thoughts in their place. As he is reconciled to God in Christ Jesus, so is his mind reconciled to the teaching against which he at first rebelled. He loves the Law of the Lord just as he finds it. And instead of judging it and daring to set himself up as a dictator of what it ought to be, he is humble and docile and cries, “Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears.”

He loves every Truth which the Lord declares—yes, and the very style and method of the declaration. Every word of God’s Book has in it music for his ears, beauty for his eyes, honey for his mouth and food for his soul. The teachings of God’s Word are to the instructed Believer not only articles of faith but matters of life. Our faith has imbibed them and our experience has assimilated them. We could part with everything except what we have learned out of the Sacred Book by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. For that flows through our souls like the blood through our body and it is intermixed with every vital part of our being.

Like wool which has been made to lie long in scarlet we are dyed ingrain. As certain insects take their color from the leaves they feed upon, so have we become tinctured to the core of our nature with the living and incorruptible Word. It has proved its own inspiration by inspiring us with its Spirit. Now we live in the Word as the fish in the stream. It is the element of our spiritual life. This may suffice to set before you the sort of people who obtain great peace from the Law of the Lord, because, in the truest sense, they love it.

This inward and spiritual love to God’s Word includes many other good things. Permit me to use the connection in order to help myself as to order and to help you as to memory. Read the first verse of this octave—the 161st verse—“Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart stands in awe of Your Word.” The love of God’s Law includes a deep reverence for it. That man is blessed who trembles at God’s Word. This Book is not to be compared with other books. It is not of the same class and order. It is inspired in a sense in which they are not.

It stands alone and is not one among other books. As towers an Alp above the molehills of the meadow, so Holy Scripture rises above the purest, truest and holiest literature of man’s composing. Even if all those other books are purged of error and are corrected to the highest degree of human knowledge, yet would they no more reach to the degree of the Book of God than man can become God. It is supreme and of another quality from all the rest of them. Other writings we feel free to criticize but, “My heart stands in awe of Your Word.” The man who loves God’s Word does not trifle with it. It is far too sacred to be toyed with. He does not mock it. For he believes it to be God’s Word.

With a docility which comes of true sonship, it is enough for him that his Father says so. His one anxiety is, as far as possible, to know the meaning of his Father’s Words—and, that known, all debate is out of the question. “Thus says the Lord,” is to every true child of God the end of the matter. I have often told you, my dear Friends, that I view the difficulties of Holy Scriptures as so many prayer-stools upon which I kneel and worship the glorious Lord. What we cannot comprehend by our understanding, we apprehend by our affections. Awe of God’s Word is a main element in that love of God’s Law which brings great peace.

This advances to rejoicing in it. Read verse 162—“I rejoice at Your Word, as one that finds great spoil.” As a conqueror in the glad hour of victory shouts over the dividing of the prey, so do Believers rejoice in God’s Word. I can recollect as a youth the great joy I had when the doctrines of Divine Grace were gradually opened up to me by the Spirit of Truth. I did not at first perceive the whole chain of precious Truth. I knew that Jesus had suffered in my place and that by believing in Him I had found peace. But the deep things of the Covenant of Grace came to me one by one, even as at night you first see one star and then another and by-and-by the whole heavens are studded with them.

When it first became clear to me that salvation was all of grace, what a revelation it was! I saw that God had made me to differ from others—I ascribed my salvation wholly to His free favor. I perceived that, at the back of the grace which I had received, there must have been a purpose to give that grace and then the glorious fact of an election of grace flowed in upon my soul in a torrent of delight. I saw that the love of God to His own was without beginning—a boundless, fathomless, infinite, endless love—which carries every chosen vessel of mercy from grace to glory. What a God is the God of Sovereign Grace! How did my soul rejoice as I saw the God of love in His sovereignty, immutability, faithfulness and omnipotence!

“Among the gods there is none like unto You.” So will any young convert here rejoice if he so loves the Law of the Lord as to continue studying it and receiving the illumination of the Holy Spirit concerning it. As the child of God sees into the deep things of God he will be ready to clap his hands for joy. It is a delightful sensation to feel that you are growing. Trees, I suppose, do not know when they grow, but men and women do— when the growth is spiritual. We seem to pass into a new Heaven and a new earth as we discover God’s Truth. A new guest has come to live within our mind and He has brought with Him banquets such as we never tasted before.

Oh how happy is that man to whose loving mind Holy Scripture is opening up its priceless treasures! We know that we love God’s Word when we can rejoice in it. We wish that we could gather up every crumb of Scripture and find food in its smallest fragments. Even its bitter rebukes are sweet to us. I would kiss the very feet of Scripture and wash them with my tears! Alas, that I should sin against it by a thought, much more by a word! If it is but God’s Word, though some may call it non-essential, we dare not think it so. The little things of God are more precious than the great things of man. The Truth of God is no trifle to one who has fought his way to it and learned it in the school of affliction. “O my Soul, you have trod down strength!” And that which you have gained in the battle is your joyful spoil.

Further than this, we receive Holy Scripture with emotion. David says, “I hate and abhor lying: but Your Law do I love.” He regards all that is opposed to the Law of the Lord as hateful lying. Those are hard words, David! Surely you are sinning against the charity of our cultured age! Yes, but when a man feels strongly, he cannot help speaking strongly. “I hate,” says he and that is not enough. He says, “I hate and abhor lying.” His whole being revolts at it. He means not only that lying with which in common life men would deceive their fellows—that is hateful enough. But he refers especially to that kind of teaching which gives the lie to the Law of the Lord. For he adds, “But your Law do I love.”

A good man’s hate of falsehood is as intense as his love of the Truth of God. It must necessarily be so. He who worships the true God detests and loathes idols. In these days there are many men to whom the Truths of Scripture are like a pack of cards to be shuffled as occasion suits. To them peace and quietness are jewels and the Truth of God is as the mire of the streets. It does not matter to them what this man preaches and what that man writes. Hold your tongue—it will be all the same a hundred years from now—and really, nobody can be quite sure of anything!

To the man that is loyal to his Lord and faithful to his convictions, it can never be so. He hates the teaching which belies his God. He that has never felt his blood boil against an error which robs God of His glory does not love the Law, nor will he know that great peace which comes by having the Law enshrined in the heart.

One other virtue is included in the love of the Word. According to the context, great gratitude to God for His Word is formed in the believing heart. “Seven times a day do I praise You because of Your righteous judgments.” God’s judgments written in His Word are matters of praise—

*“This is the judge that ends the strife*

*Where wit and reason fail.”*  
God’s judgments actively going on in the world which tally with those predicted in His Word are also matters for adoring praise. The God of the Word is the God of the deed. What He says He does and every day and all the day we praise Him for it.

Beloved, God may do what He wills and we will praise Him. He may say what He wills and we will praise Him. We read in His Word stern things, words of wrath and deeds of vengeance. Shall we try to soften them, or invent apologies for them? By no means. Jehovah our God is a consuming fire. We love Him, not as He is improved upon by “modern thought,” but as He reveals Himself in Scripture. The God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob—“this God is our God forever and ever—He will be our Guide, even unto death.” Even when He is robed in the terror of His judgments, we sing praises unto His name. Even as they did at the Red Sea, when they saw Pharaoh and his host swallowed up in the mighty waters—“Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider has He thrown into the sea.”

Our hallelujahs are “to Him that slew mighty kings; for His mercy endures forever.” It is not mine to improve upon the character of Jehovah but to reverence and adore Him as He manifests Himself, either in judgment or in Divine Grace. I, who am less than nothing, and vanity, dare not scan His work, nor bring Him to my bar, lest I hear a voice saying, “No, but O man, who are you that replies against God?” What am I that I

should be the ultimate judge of truth, or of justice, or of wisdom? Whatever God may be, or speak, or do—that is right—it is not mine to arraign my Maker but to adore Him.

Extenuations, explanations and apologies may be produced from the best of motives. But too often they suggest to opposers that it is admitted that God’s most Holy Word contains something in it which is doubtful, or weak, or antiquated. It looks as though it needed to be defended by human wisdom. Brethren, the Word of the Lord can stand alone, without the propping which many are giving it. These props come down and then our adversaries think that the Book is down, too. The Word of God can take care of itself and will do so if we preach it and cease defending it. See that lion? They have caged him for his preservation—shut him up behind iron bars to secure him from his foes!

See how a band of armed men have gathered together to protect the lion. What a clatter they make with their swords and spears! These mighty men are intent upon defending a lion. O fools and slow of heart! Open that door! Let the lord of the forest come forth free. Who will dare to encounter him? What does he want with your guardian care? Let the pure Gospel go forth in all its lion-like majesty and it will soon clear its own way and ease itself of its adversaries. Yes, without attempting to apologize even for the severer Truths of Revelation, seven times a day do we praise the Lord for giving us His judgments, so righteous and so sure.

I have shown you now, dear Friends, how this love lies deep in the heart and how it includes much of honor and reverence. Let me further remark that this love is productive of many good things. They that love God’s Word will meditate on it and make it the man of their right hand. What a companion the Bible is! It talks with us by the way, it communes with us upon our beds—it knows us altogether and has a suitable word for every condition of life. Hence we cannot be long without listening to our Beloved’s voice in this Book of books. I hope we realize the character described in the first Psalm—“His delight is in the Law of the Lord. And in His Law does he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water.”

Love to the Word of God creates great courage in the defense of it. It is wonderful how the most timid creatures will defend their young, how even a hen becomes a terrible bird when she has to take care of her chicks— even so, quiet men and women contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints and will not tamely submit to see the Truth of God torn in pieces by the hounds of error and hypocrisy.

The love of the Law of God breeds penitence for having sinned against it and perseverance in obedience to it. It also begets patience under suffering, for it leads the man to submit himself to the will of God whom he loves so much. He says, “It is the Lord. Let Him do what seems good to Him.” The Word of God begets and fosters holiness. Jesus said, “Sanctify them through Your Truth; Your Word is Truth.” You cannot study the Scriptures diligently and love them heartily without having your thoughts and acts savored and sweetened by them. A gentleness and kindness will be infused into your spirit by the very tone of the Word. A sacred delicacy and carefulness of conduct will surround your daily life in proportion as you steep your mind in Scripture.

Let me commend to you, my beloved Friends, that you live with the Law of the Lord till even men of the world perceive that you keep choice company. The trashy lives of most people are the fit outcome of the trash which they read. A life fed on fiction is a life of fiction. A life fed on Divine fact will become a life of Divine fact. I have no time in which to show you all the sweet uses of the Law of the Lord—it does much for the formation of a perfect character. No molding force is so much to be desired as that of the Word of the Lord in the love of it.

This much, however, I must add—if in any of us there is a love of the Law of the Lord, this is a work of the Holy Spirit. Nature does not love God and hence it does not love God’s Law. Human nature is in open and active rebellion to everything that is commanded or commended by the thriceholy God. If, then, you love God and His holy Law, the Holy Spirit has been at work in you. And by this new love it is proven that you are a new creature. The old nature delights itself in everything which is of the earth earthy. It is only the new and heavenly life which can appreciate and love heavenly things. My Brothers and Sisters, let your love of the Law be to you a proof of your regeneration—you have passed from darkness into marvelous light—for you love light. Let this be to you the evidence of your election—you had never loved God and His Law if He had not loved you first.

What can your love to God be but a reflection of His love to you? Hear Him say, “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” See, also, in this love of God’s Law the prophecy of your ultimate perfection. We do not keep the Law as we would. But if we desire to keep it, that which holds the will is the real Law of our life. If there is in us a strong and passionate desire to accept and obey God’s Word in everything and to be conformed to it in thought and life, that desire will ultimately get the victory. Use well the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God—and by the force of your love give sin sharp and heavy thrusts and you shall conquer until every thought is brought into captivity to the Law of Christ.

II. We have spent too long a time upon our first point and shall have to be brief upon the other heads. Our second division is a very sweet part of the text. Here is A SPECIAL POSSESSION, “great peace have they which love Your Law.”

When Orientals meet each other their usual salutation is “Shalom”— “Peace be to you.” The word does not mean merely quiet and rest but happiness or prosperity. Great peace means great prosperity. Those who love God’s Law have great blessedness in this life as well as in that which is to come. In loving the Law of God we have intense enjoyment and real success in life.

Let us, however, take the text as we have it in our Bibles. By peace here is not meant that a man who loves God’s Law will have great peace with everybody, for that is not at all true. If David penned this sentence, he

certainly was not an instance of great peace with men flowing out of his love to the Lord’s Law. He was a man of war from his youth. He had peace as a shepherd boy but even then he had to kill lions and bears and soon after he had to meet a giant in single combat. Neither in his family nor in Saul’s court was he at peace. He was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains and had to run for it from day to day. He had not much earthly peace.

When he had done with Saul, the Philistines invaded the land. If it is possible, we are to live peaceably with all men. But He who has put enmity between the serpent and the woman never meant that we should enjoy the friendship of the world. The great peace which they have who love God’s Law refers to a peace which can exist when strife rages all around us. Does not it mean this—first, great restfulness of the intellect? If we love God’s Law in the sense in which we have explained it, so as to stand in awe of it and rejoice over it, the result will be great peace of mind.

Everybody must find infallibility somewhere. Some think it is with the Pope at Rome, others dream that it is in themselves—the second theory is no more true than the first. Others of us believe that infallibility lies in the Word of God—this Book is to us the final court of appeal. When God’s Holy Spirit leads us into the Truth which He has revealed in this Book, we feel a full assurance that we know the Truth of God and we speak from experience when we say that the loving belief of the Word brings us great intellectual repose. I care nothing what supposed philosophers may discover—they cannot discover anything true which is contrary to God’s Word. I know that I am speaking that which is best for my fellow men in the highest and best sense, when I am not venting a theory but setting forth a Revelation from Heaven.

He who gave us the infallible Book has all the responsibility for its contents. If I believe what God tells me and do what He bids me, the results are with Him and not with me. He is the ruler of the universe and not I. And if there are any terrible mysteries, He must explain them—not I—if they ought to be explained. I am like a servant who is sent to the door with a message. If I deliver the message which my Master gives me as I receive it, you must not be angry with me, for I did not invent the message, I only repeated it to you. Be angry with my Master, not with me.

That is how I feel when I have done preaching. If I have honestly preached what I believe to be in God’s Word, I am free from all responsibility for my ministry. My responsibility lies in endeavoring to interpret the Word as clearly as I can. I am not accountable for its teaching. I have not before me the unbearable burden of composing a Gospel. I remember well a minister, whom I much respect, saying to me, “I wish I could feel as you do. You have certain fixed principles about which you are sure and you have only to state them and enforce them. But I am in a formative state. I make my theology fresh every week.”

Dear me, I thought, what a hopeless state for progress and establishment! If the student of mathematics had no fixed law as to the value of numbers but made a new multiplication table every week, he would not make many calculations. If a baker were to say to me, “Sir, I am always altering the ingredients of my bread—I make a different bread every week,” I should be afraid the fellow would poison me one of these days. I would rather go to a man whose bread I had found good and nourishing. I cannot afford to experiment in the Bread of Life. Besides, there is an intellectual unrest in all this kind of thing which is escaped from when we come to love the Word of the Lord as we love our lives. Oh, the rest of knowing within your very soul that the Truth of God you rest upon is a sure foundation!

Those who love God’s Word have also a great peace which comes of a pacified conscience. Conscience is as a terrible wild beast when aroused and irritated by a sense of sin. Nothing will quiet conscience effectually and properly but the great doctrine of the Substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. When we see that God has laid on His only begotten Son all our iniquities and that the chastisement of our peace was exacted of Him as our Substitute, then conscience smiles upon us. If God is satisfied with regard to our sins, we are satisfied, too. We see in the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ that which must satisfy Divine justice and therefore our conscience receives a safe and holy quiet and we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have received the atonement.

And the same conscience also brings great peace when it bears testimony to renewal of heart and life. When a man knows in his own soul that he seeks to do that which is right in the sight of God, and that he is aspiring after a pure, gracious, useful life, he has great peace even when others ridicule him. If you have taken your own way and acted dishonestly for gain, peace will not visit your heart. But if you have loved God’s Law and kept to the way of strict integrity, you will have within your own bosom an angel of peace to strengthen you in the hour of sorrow. “The testimony of a good conscience is like the song of the angels to the shepherds at Bethlehem.”

Beloved, what a peace the love of the Word brings to the heart! All hearts require an object of love. How many hearts have been broken because the thing beloved has disappointed them and proved false to their hopes? But when you love God’s Word, your love is not wasted upon an unworthy object. It introduces you to Christ and you love Him intensely, and however much you yield your heart to Him, you are always safe. Jesus is never a Judas to His friends. Jesus cannot be loved too well and hence the heart has great peace when it comes to Him.

To love God’s Word gives great peace as to our desires. You will not be grasping after wealth when the Word is better to you than the most fine gold. You will not be ambitious to shine among men when to you the Word of the Lord is a kingdom large enough. Your desires will be regulated by true wisdom when your heart is garrisoned by the Word of the Lord which dwells in you richly. When Christ Himself is our All in All, we are harbored in the haven of peace. When our desires find their pasturage around the

Great Shepherd’s feet, our ambitions cease to roam and we abide at home in peace. Content with a dinner of herbs in our Lord’s company, we no longer pine for the stalled ox of the wicked who prospers in his way. To love the Law is to cease from covetousness and to cease from covetousness is great peace.

When we love God’s Law, we reach forward to the peace of resignation to God, acquiescence in His will and conformity to it. It is of no use to quarrel with God. Let me say more—it is disgraceful, ungrateful and wicked—for a child of God to do so. When we perfectly yield to God our heart’s sorrow is at an end. The sting of affliction lies in the tail of our rebellion against the Divine will. When we love God’s Word intensely, we take pleasure in persecutions, tribulations and infirmities, since they instruct us in the Divine promises and open up to us the hidden meanings of the Spirit. Our mind is so near to God and so pleased with all that pleases Him, that we do not desire to suffer less, or to be less weak, or less tried, than the will of God ordains. To love the Law and the Lawgiver goes a great way towards loving all that He appoints and decrees. And this is a garden of peace to all who know it.

Besides, the love of the Word breeds a happy confidence in God as to all things in the past, the present and the future. Whatsoever the Lord does or permits must be right, or works right. “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose.” This is a very peace-breathing belief. When we love God’s Word, we see God at the beginning of everything, God at the end of everything and God in the middle of everything. And as we see Him present whom we love, we cease from anxious thought. “My soul is even as a weaned child.” Of such a man is it written, “His soul shall dwell at ease.” The Lord whom he takes to be his Shepherd makes him to lie down in green pastures and he asks no more.

III. I am cramped by want of time. I must, therefore, in a very few words sum up what deserves to be spoken at length upon the third point. Here is A SINGULAR PRESERVATION—“Nothing shall offend them.” There shall be no stumbling block in their way.

Intellectual stumbling blocks are gone. One asks me, “Do you mean to say that you read the Bible and do not find difficulties in it?” I regard the Word of God as being infallibly inspired and therefore if I find difficulties in it, which I must do from the very nature of things, I accept what God says about those difficulties and pass on. The Word of God does not profess to explain all mysteries—it leaves them mysteries and my faith accepts them as such. When out in a yacht in the Clyde we came opposite the great rock called the Rock of Arran. Our captain did not steam right ahead and rush at the rock—no, he did what was much wiser—he cast anchor for the night in the bay at the foot of it, so that we were sheltered from the wind by the vast headland.

I remember looking up through the darkness of the night and admiring its great sheltering wing. A difficulty it was—it became a shelter. Every now and then in Scripture you come before a vast Truth. Will you steam against it and wreck your soul? Will you not, with truer wisdom, cast anchor under the lee of it? Do we need to understand everything? Are we to be all brain and no heart? What should we be the better if we understood all mysteries? I believe God. I bow before His Word. Is not this better for us than the conceit of knowing and understanding? We are as yet mere children. We know in part.

Of course, we are blessed, in this enlightened age, with some wonderfully great men who understand more than the ancients and either know the unknowable, or think they do. In a sentence I will give you the result of my observation upon men and things—“No man knows everything except a fool and he knows nothing.” I have not yet met with any exception to this rule—no, not even among the superior persons who prefer culture to Scripture. If you love the Word of God, you will see no difficulties which will in the least cause you to stumble. Love to the Word is the abolition of difficulties. Things hard to be understood become steppingstones on which to rise and not stumbling blocks over which to fall.

“Nothing shall offend them.” Does not this also mean that no moral duty shall be a cross to them which shall cause them to turn aside? They will not turn away from Jesus because a sin has to be abandoned, a lust denied, or a pleasure given up. The man who has counted the cost will not be offended by his Lord’s requirements. Does Jesus say, “Do this”? He does it without demur. Does Jesus say, “Cease from that”? He withdraws his hand at once. When a man once loves the Law of God, albeit it involves self-denial, humiliation, loss—he shrinks not at the cost. Selfdenial ceases to be self-denial when love commands it. The Cross of Christ is an easy yoke and soon ceases to be a burden. A duty which for a little season is irksome, becomes pleasurable before long to a lover of the Law of the Lord.

Moreover, the man who loves God’s Law is not offended if he has to stand alone. To some persons it is impossible to traverse a lonesome way but he that truly loves God’s Law resolves that if all men forsake him he will cleave to the Lord and His Truth. Can you not stand alone? Does solitude offend you? As for me, I am resolved, by God’s grace, not to follow a multitude to do evil. I will keep to the old faith and the old way if I never find a comrade between here and the celestial gates. I do not think a man loves God’s Word thoroughly till it breeds in him a self-contained peace so that he is satisfied from himself and drinks water out of the cistern of his own experience.

Paul was not offended though at his first answer no man stood by him. What have we to do with other men as supporters of our faith? To their own master they stand or fall. As for our Master in Heaven, let us follow Him through life and unto death. For to whom else could we go? He only has the words of Eternal Life.

Neither will such persons ever be so offended as to despair of God’s great cause. The night grows darker and darker but the man who loves the Divine Law expects the sun to rise at its appointed hour. Oh, that the Lord would hasten it in His own time! If He delays we will not, therefore, doubt. Divine Grace has produced, in past ages, men who were confident

as to the triumph of the Truth of God when others feared for it. Look at the dauntless courage of Luther, who, when everybody else despaired of the Gospel, trusted his God and cheered his people and would not hear of drawing back. He could not pronounce the word “despair.” “Luther, can you shake Rome? The harlot sits enthroned upon her seven hills, can you hope to dislodge her, or loose the captive nations from her bonds? Can you do this?”

“No,” said Luther, “but God can.” Luther brought his God into the quarrel and you know which way the conflict turned. Not today, nor tomorrow, nor in twenty years, may God’s Truth win—but the Lord can afford to wait—His lifetime is eternity. O Struggler for the Truth, make sure that you are with God and with the Truth and then be sure that God is with you in Truth and will deliver you. “Nothing shall offend them.”

It is wonderful, if you love God’s Word, how things which are stumbling blocks to others cease to be injurious to you. Suppose you enjoy prosperity—if you love God’s Law you will not be puffed up by deceitful riches or honors. You will be humble when all men admire you and all comforts flow in upon you. The Lord’s Word in your heart will be as a salt to your estate so that it breeds in you neither worldliness, nor forgetfulness of God, nor pride. Your goods shall be your good, if you learn to use them for God’s glory.

The same will be true of adversity. He that can stand on the hilltop can stand in the valley. If you love God’s Law you are the man to be poor, to be sickly, to be slandered. For you can bear it all because you have meat to eat that the world knows not of. Your love to God’s Law will furnish you with a ceaseless stream of consolation. Nothing will dampen the flame of your spirit because the Lord feeds it secretly with a golden oil. O Servants of God, let us be glad together in this day of rebuke! The thunder is heard but it is mere noise. The sea roars but it is only roaring. Let us laugh at those who would silence faithful testimony. For the Lord God omnipotent reigns and great is the peace which He gives to the lovers of His Law.

As for you who love not God’s Law, who know nothing of Jesus, because you have never submitted to the Law of faith—there is no “great peace” for you. There may be the deceptive cry of, “Peace, peace, when there is no peace.” But may the Lord save you from it! Soul, there is no hope for you, you can not rest till you are at one with God. As surely as God made you, you must yield to your Maker and accept your Redeemer and be renewed by His Holy Spirit, or you are lost forever.

I pray God the Holy Spirit lead you to accept what God has revealed and bow yourself to the supreme majesty of His Word—especially to the power and grace of the Incarnate Word, the Lord Christ Jesus. Then will you have great peace for this world and the next. God bless you, Beloved, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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A SINCERE SUMMARY—AND A SEARCHING SCRUTINY  
NO. 2671

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, APRIL 22, 1900.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, OCTOBER 29, 1882.

**“I have kept Your precepts and Your testimonies: for all my ways are before You.”  
Psalm 119:168.**

**“I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Your servant; for I do not forget Your commandments.”  
Psalm 119:176.**

IF anyone says that these two texts contradict one another, I say that they do not. They form a paradox and they are both true, and true of the same man, at the same time. I will read them to you again. “I have kept Your precepts and Your testimonies: for all my ways are before You.” “I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Your servant; for I do not forget Your commandments.”

I purpose to take our first text as a sincere summary of a godly man’s life and our second text as a searching scrutiny, or as the result of a searching scrutiny, which looks below the surface, and then comes to a conclusion, not contradictory to the former one, yet supplementary to it.

I. First, then, dear Friends, our first text is A SINCERE SUMMARY OF A GODLY MAN’S LIFE. Looking back, he can say of it in general, “I have kept Your precepts and Your testimonies: for all my ways are before You.”

First, let me say that it is necessary that we should have so lived that this shall be the summary of our life, for if we have not so lived, what evidence have we that we have been born again—that we have passed from death unto life—that we have been delivered from the bondage of sin and brought into the way of holiness? If our life is not different from what it used to be, how can we try to deceive ourselves with the idea that we are converted? If our lives are no better than the lives of unregenerate men, what reason can we have for believing that we are regenerate? After all, at the last we shall be judged according to our works. “By their fruits you shall know them,” is a test that still stands good and will stand good even to the end. “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap.” And, in looking back, if our life has been ungodly—if it has been wanton and unchaste—if it has not been characterized by sobriety, honesty, prayerfulness, consecration, what can we say of it? We shall have to judge ourselves to be still “out of the way” and to have need that we should turn to God with full purpose of heart and seek what, evidently, we have not at present found. If the Grace which we are supposed to have received has not made us to differ both from our former self and from men of the world, then it is not the true Grace of God.

Next, whenever a man can truly say, with the Psalmist, “I have kept Your precepts and Your testimonies,” it is a fruit of Grace. It is not a product of the legal spirit. It is not a result of free will un-helped by God’s Grace and love. Wherever there is even a spark of holiness, it must have come from that great central fire which is in the heart of God. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” There is not on earth a rare flower of loveliness and purity which is not an exotic—it is blooming in a clime to which it is a stranger. God has planted it with His own right hand.

So, then, he who can thus sum up his life has nothing of which to glory, for he has received from God everything of good there is in it and, therefore, he gives all the glory of it to the Giver and takes none of it to himself. It is faith that works by love, purifying the soul, and producing the devout and godly character—and faith never claims any honor for itself, for it is, itself, the gift of God. Christ says much in praise of faith because faith says so much in praise of Christ! And faith is used, in the Covenant of Grace, as a means of blessing, because it excludes boasting and gives all the glory to God, who works all that is good within us. So, you see, dear Friends, that there is nothing of legality in what I am saying now when I testify that a godly Christian, when he sums up his life, can say, “I have kept Your precepts and Your testimonies.”

Next, this summary of life is excellent for its breadth. Notice how it is worded. It comprehends the precepts and the testimonies of the Lord. That is, the practical and the doctrinal parts of true religion. There are some persons who appear to be very scrupulous concerning the precepts and they are very anxious to keep them. So far, they do well. But as to the Doctrines of Grace, they say, “We do not know much about them,” and they appear to think that it is not at all necessary that they should know about them. A very large part of God’s Word, which teaches most precious Truth, they slur. They think that it does not matter to them. Should they not believe according to the denomination in which they were born or brought up? They say that there is no particular necessity for them to be so diligent in searching and knowing the Word. The Psalmist thought not so, but he said to the Lord, “I have kept Your precepts and Your testimonies.” I feel that I am as much bound to believe right as to act right and it is just as truly a sin to believe error, when I can learn the truth, as it is to commit iniquity. We are responsible to God for the use we make of our understanding, as well as for the exercise of our affections. There is nothing in the Word of God to justify men in believing what they like, and anyone who neglects to search out the Truth of God commits a sin of omission. He who holds an error which he might see to be an error if he looked in the mirror of God’s Word, is guilty of rebellion against the teaching of God. If we would live a life such as we can look back upon with pleasure, we ought to try to keep the testimonies as well as the precepts of the Lord.

I have met with some people who used to be more numerous than they are now, who were very strenuous about the Doctrines of Grace. If anybody differed from their view of the Doctrines, they at once said that he was unsound. I should hardly like to repeat the hard things they used to say about such a person, but, certainly, to be sound in the Truth of God was the grand thing with them. And I do not condemn them for that, but I do blame them because, sometimes, practical preaching seemed irksome to them and the enforcement of the precepts of the Word made them wrathful—they could not endure it. You could tickle their palates and delight them with a good strong sermon on the Doctrines of Grace, but when you came to insist upon holy walking, they would turn upon their heels and say that the preacher was “legal.”

Now, inasmuch as I before said that to neglect God’s testimonies is an evil, so I add that to neglect the precepts is an equal evil. Be you, O man of God, as earnest to do the right as to believe the right and, on the other hand, as earnest to believe the right as to do the right! Your whole nature should be subject to God. He is to be your Teacher as well as your LawGiver. Will you not sit at the feet of Jesus, like Mary did, to learn of Him, as well as rise up, like Martha did, to serve Him? If you will not, then you give to Him a lame and limping obedience. “The legs of the lame are not equal,” and your obedience is lame, since the legs of it are not equal. There is a long doctrine and a short obedience, or a long precept and a short doctrine. Be it not so with you, O man of God, if you would look back upon a well-ordered life! Happy shall that man be who can say, “Ever since that glad day when I was brought as a penitent to my Master’s feet, I have studiously endeavored to do what He has bid me do and I have just as earnestly shunned and turned away from everything which I have known to be sin. I praise the Lord that He has helped me to keep my garments unspotted from the world.”

But if he would be a complete Christian, he must be able to add, I have also strived to believe all that is taught in the Word of God. I have not given myself up blindly to be led by priest or minister. I felt that God had given me a conscience for which I was responsible, not to my fellow men, but to Him, so I have gone to the Law and to the Testimony, testing everything by that Infallible standard. I have not sat down in idleness, taking things for granted because they were preached with brilliant oratory, but, like the Bereans, I have searched the Scriptures daily to see whether these things are so or not.” Ah, Beloved, it will make a soft pillow for your head if, in the retrospect of life, you can say, “I have made the Law of God, in its teachings and in its commands, to be the rule of my whole life.” God grant that you may have that satisfaction at the last!

Further, dear Friends, this summary is excellent for its length, as well as for its breadth, for here the man of God says, “I have kept Your precepts and Your testimonies.” I do not know how long the Psalmist had kept them, but it seems to me natural that he should make this summary towards the end of his life. I pray that it may be so with us when we come to die. I have known the gray-headed old man—how well I knew him, and how greatly I loved him, for I mean my venerable grandfather— who, when he was dying, could say, “That which I preached when I first entered the pulpit I have preached to the last. And for 58 years, to the best of my knowledge I have preached nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I have nothing to retract of the testimony which I have given, for what the Spirit of God taught me, that have I taught to others.” And he could equally have said at the last, “I have, as a father, trained my children in God’s fear and they are all following in my footsteps. I have, as a pastor, watched over my flock with sedulous care. I have set them an example which they can safely follow. And there is no man who can truthfully lay a charge against me, for in all uprightness and integrity have I walked before God.”

Mark you, this dear old man was a Calvinist—an out-and-out preacher of Free Grace who would not, for a moment, take the slightest credit to himself for anything that he was, or had done! Yet he could not have said less than this unless he had pretended to possess a modesty which was not true and mimicked a humility which was based on falsehood. In like manner, may we be kept, by the Grace of God, clear of all trusting in our works, but, at the same time, may we abound in good works to the Glory of God and, both in thought and in life, may we be clear in the sight of God! Oh, how I have envied that first Quaker, George Fox, who, with all the eccentricities of his life, could honestly say on his deathbed, “I am clear, I am clear, I am clear of the blood of all men.” This is the highest ambition that a minister’s heart may indulge—that he should be able to say that at the last—as other men of God have been able to do.

So, you see, this is a blessed summary as to length as well as breadth. Above all things, it is excellent from its cause. Notice how the Psalmist says to the Lord, “I have kept Your precepts and Your testimonies.” That is what the true man of God still says, “I followed the precept because it was God’s precept. I did not care whether a Church or a Council of any sort had set its stamp upon it. It was God’s precept and that was enough for me. And I believed the Doctrine because it was His testimony. It might not be the testimony of any Reformer, or Confessor, but it was enough for me that it was God’s testimony.” That should be the reason for our conviction and also our action.  
The Psalmist kept God’s precepts and testimonies because all his ways were before God. He felt that God was watching him. He lived under the consciousness of God’s Presence with him both by night and by day and, therefore, he dared not believe anything contrary to God’s Truth, or act contrary to God’s command. “You God see me” either held him in check or else impelled him onward. This is the way for us, also, to live, dear Friends! I pray that you may live thus.  
I think the Psalmist also meant, when he said that all his ways were before God, that they were under God’s smile of approval. God not only observed, but He communed with and commended His servant. Another Psalmist, or perhaps the writer of these words which form our text, said, “I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.” And Enoch might have said, “I have walked with God from day to day. Communion with Him has been my continual delight and all my ways have been before Him.” The Book of Psalms begins thus—“Blessed is the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the Law of the Lord; and in His Law does he meditate day and night.” His ways are always before God and he has respect unto the Law of the Lord evermore.  
Such a life as that, dear Friends, is excellent from its use. It is sure to be a life of happiness, even though it should bring on persecution. It is certain, also, to be a useful life. It is an example which your children and your children’s children may safely follow. It is an argument for the Gospel which the most skeptical cannot refute and it is a most blessed way of propagating that Gospel, for men are more often convinced by our actions than by our words. Seek after it, dear Friends, and let your lives be such that you may close them with the words of my first text, “I have kept Your precepts and Your testimonies: for all my ways are before You.”  
II. Now let us pause a moment and observe that the Psalmist, after he had spoken thus, and spoken quite sincerely and truly, yet felt that he must close his long life’s summary in another fashion. He then uttered our second text, which I called a SEARCHING SCRUTINY. “I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Your servant; for I do not forget Your commandments.”  
His life was perfect, after the manner of Scriptural perfection, but when it was carefully examined and scrutinized, it was found to be manifestly imperfect! Suppose you take a needle, one of the very best that has ever been made—any seamstress would be glad to use it. She would never think of sending a packet of such needles back and saying that they were not good. They are bright, untarnished, sharp, smooth—all that they should be—quite perfect needles. But just put one of them under a microscope—I have done so—and then see what it is like! Why, now, it is a bar of steel—rough and ugly-looking, tending towards a point at one end, but certainly very blunt. That is just the difference between the microscopic examination and the ordinary observation of our poor eyes. So, the life of a Believer may be like that of Job, “perfect and upright,” but when it comes under the scrutiny of an eye that is illuminated by the Spirit of God and touched with the heavenly eye-salve, quite another verdict is given! And, tremblingly, with many tears, the confession is poured into the ear of God, “I have gone astray like a lost sheep”— followed by the petition—“Seek Your servant” and the renewed declaration, “for I do not forget Your commandments.”  
Here is, first, a confession of imperfection and of helplessness. It really means a continual imperfection and helplessness, for the Hebrew verb relates not only to the past, but to the present. It might just as well be read, “I am still going astray like a lost sheep.” Indeed, it must be so read, for the Psalmist goes on to say, “Seek Your servant.” He would not have offered such a prayer if his confession had only related to something that was at an end. There is, here, not only imperfection and the tendency to a continuous imperfection, but there is also an acknowledgment of helplessness! The Psalmist does not say, “I have gone astray like a lost sheep, but I can return when I please.” No, he prays to the Lord, “Seek Your servant,” as if the only help for him lay in the search which the great Shepherd would make and the consequent restoration which would come by His gracious and powerful hand!  
Let us just think for a little while and then I feel sure that we shall soon say that we must confess to God as the Psalmist did. I mean that each one of those here present who have led godly lives will still have to say to the Lord, “I have gone astray like a lost sheep.” Think first of God’s precepts. Have we ever gone astray in heart from any one of them? Suppose you never have departed from them in life—which is a very charitable supposition—have you ever in heart felt the precepts to be hard? Had you been really perfect, it would have been easy, it would have been natural for you to keep them. Have you not sometimes had to whip yourself up to a duty? The need of being whipped up to it proves that evil is still remaining within you. Then, have you ever forgotten a precept? Lives there a man who has carried out all the precepts of God without forgetting any one of them? I would like to see the Brother who has done so— but such a Brother I never expect to see.

I think that, with the most of us, it is thus. There is a certain duty and we try to do it with all our hearts, but, meanwhile, we forget another duty which is just as binding upon us as the first was. We look right on and so we overlook the duties that lie on the right hand and on the left. The very intensity which makes us earnest about one thing often prevents our attending to another thing which is equally important—and thus we present to God one duty stained with the blood of another! I have known a father, in aiming at being firm with his children, err by being too severe. But far oftener have I known others, intent upon being kind to their children, who have grown like Eli and have winked at their sin. That is but one instance among thousands of the evil I am deploring. A man may say, “I shall rebuke So-and-So for his fault,” but he does it too sharply and therein he errs. Or, afraid of being too severe, he says nothing and therein he errs. Did you ever, in all your life, do any one thing so well that it could not possibly have been done better? The difference between the good there was in what you did and the good there might have been in it is just so much of deficiency—and sin is any lack of conformity to perfection. Whether you fall short of the mark or go over the line matters little. In either case, you have missed the perfection God demands. If you do not reach His standard, you have not yet attained to perfect holiness and there is still something of sin to confess.  
The precepts of the Lord are so broad that they touch the secret imagination of the heart. Is there a man living who never has an unclean desire? “I fought against it,” says one. I know you did, but the very desire was sinful. Or, if it has not come to a desire, was there never an impure imagination that crossed your mind? “Yes, it just flitted across my mind,” you say. Well, in proportion as you yielded to it, in that proportion it was a guilty thing. Yes—I must say it—if even a dream has had anything of sin in it, and you have been complacent over it, it detects the sin that is within you, for were you really perfect, even the very passing thought, though it were but as a bird of the air that flew above your head, would still, by casting a shadow over your spirit, cause you vexation and sorrow. Keep that microscope close at hand and it need not have very strong lenses—only look fairly into your own life, first, by the light of the Law of God, and, secondly, by the light of your obligations to Christ who has redeemed you with His precious blood—and then I feel sure that you will have to say, “I fall short even of my own ideal and I am persuaded that my ideal falls very far short of what God’s ideal of perfection is.”  
Has it not often struck you, dear Friends, as a very amazing thing that good men—some of the best of men who have ever lived—have nevertheless been guilty of things which, at the present moment, we regard as heinous crimes? Mr. Whitefield had a strong objection to slavery, but still it did not seem to him to be wrong to have a number of slaves at the orphan house at Savannah—and to speak of them as his goods and chattels. That was a matter about which the conscience of the good man was not then enlightened. We do ill if we condemn men too strongly for things about which no enlightenment has come to them, but are they not, themselves, guilty in the sight of God? Of course they are! There are men, nowadays, carrying on trades that are doing mischief and only mischief to the populace, but they are not aware of the evil, their conscience is not enlightened about it.  
To take another line of thought, suppose a man is worth many hundreds of thousands of pounds and all the while there are millions of people abroad perishing for lack of the Gospel and, often, the great deficiency of the Missionary Societies is not in the men, but in the means to send out the preachers of the Gospel? Is that man right, before the living God, who says, “I am not my own, for I am bought with a price, and all that I am and have belongs to Christ,” and yet who nevertheless remains immensely rich—rich beyond anything that he or his children after him can ever need? Yet, possibly, his conscience is not enlightened about that matter and it is no very great crime in his judgment—neither may you and I condemn him, for our own conscience is probably quite as much in the dark upon something else. But whenever anybody, who is very rich, gets up and says, “I am a perfect man,” I feel inclined to say what Christ said to the young man who thought that he was perfect, “Sell all that you have.” Somebody asks, perhaps, “Does Christ propose that test to every one of us?” No, certainly not, but to any of us who say that we are perfect, that test may be applied. If you are such a perfect man, see if you can do as our Lord said—sell all that you have, and give the proceeds to the poor. I have known a man sing—  
*“Yet if I might make some reserve,  
And duty did not call,  
I love my God with zeal so great  
That I should give Him all”—*

but, all the while, he has been trying to feel whether it was a three-penny piece or a four-penny piece that he was going to give to the collection!

As I begin to think of these various things which I have mentioned— just casting, as it were, a little ray of light upon them, not the great Light of the eternal purity of God—I cannot understand how there can be any man, even though he has kept God’s precepts and testimonies as far as he could, who, nevertheless, is not bound to say, “I have gone astray like a lost sheep.”

But, further, suppose it to be possible that we have not gone astray from the precepts of the Lord, how about His testimonies? Is any man here prepared to say, “I feel that I have, in every respect, believed the Truths of God as they are revealed in God’s Word, and that I have never erred from them”? Do you believe all the Truths of God and all the Truths in their right proportions and relations? And do you give due emphasis to each Truth at the right moment? Have you ever believed that which afterwards you found to be incorrect and false? Possibly you have not willfully done this, but have you done it at all? Think of Augustine, that mighty master and teacher in the Church of God, sitting down in his old age and writing his, “Confessions.” Alas, even he found that he had plenty of things to confess and to amend! And it must be so with us, too. The very man who can say, “In the main, I have preached the same things all through my ministry,” yet, nevertheless, adds, “I preached them as far as I knew them, but I did not know them at the first as I learned them afterwards. I did not know this Truth in relation to that Truth and I sometimes misrepresented God in my very zeal to give a correct statement—and I slew one Truth of God in my defense of another.” Ah, Friends, we are all so fallible! No, more than that, we do all so sadly fail in one way or another, that we must meekly bow our head and each one, say, “I have gone astray like a lost sheep.”

I am afraid that I might have put this matter much more strongly than I have ventured to lay it before you and still have been within the mark. But there I leave it, as I need to speak upon one more point.

In that prayer of the Psalmist, “Seek Your servant,” I discern conscious faith in the Divine power. He seems to say, “Lord, I am as silly as a sheep, but if I were only a sheep, I could not pray. I am a servant, too—‘Your servant.’ It is my joy, it is my glory to be Your servant. Now, Lord, because I am Your servant, seek me. Do not lose me, Lord! You have bought me with Your blood. I am seeking You, Lord, so come and seek me. I want to be perfectly holy—come and help me. Forgive every sin of omission or of commission. Draw me away from every mistake. Draw me nearer and yet nearer to Yourself. ‘Seek Your servant.’” Perhaps you are ill, or even dying—well, living or dying, this prayer may still suit you— “Seek me, Lord, ‘seek Your servant.’”

Then, lastly, comes in that sweet reflection, “For I do not forget Your commandments.” “I have a love for them, I have a longing for them and I am sure that this never grew in my heart by nature. It is the gift of Your Grace and, because You have put it there, Lord, and You have begun to work in me, finish Your work, I pray You. Lord, You have made me long to be rid of every false way, therefore, deliver me from it. You have made me wish to be transparent and sincere. You have made me hungry and thirsty to be like Yourself! Then will you not satisfy the craving You have, Yourself, imparted?—

*“‘The dearest idol I have known,  
Whatever that idol be,  
Help me to tear it from Your Throne,  
And worship only Thee.’*

“If I hold an error, yet You know that I wish not to hold it. Show me that it is an error and I will have done with it at once. And if I am acting in good faith in a wrong way, Lord, do You but let me see that it is wrong and, cost what it may, I will do the right and cease from the evil.”

This is a blessed way in which to close our life, but there is a still more blessed way and that is, after all is said and done, and after God’s Grace has been praised for everything that is lovely and of good repute that it has worked in us, then to cast bad works and good works all away and just look to the Cross, and to the Cross alone, and see our life in Jesus’ death, our healing in His wounds, our glory in His shame, our Heaven in His anguish! Look, saint! Look now! Sinner, you may do the same. Where the saint’s salvation is, there is yours, too. And if the graybeard, hoary with years of honor and of virtue, gathering up his feet in the bed, knows no better or brighter hope than that of being justified through the righteousness of Christ and washed in His blood, it is a joy to know that the same hope is free to you guilty ones who have not kept the precepts or the testimonies of God!

Turn to Christ on Calvary! Cast your eyes on Him who, like the bronze serpent, is lifted up that every sin-bitten one may look unto Him and live! Oh, by His Grace, look to Him now and you shall live, for never a soul looked to Him and died while looking there!

God bless you, dear Friends, for Christ’s sake! Amen.  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”  
—185, 232, 119 (SONG II), 538.  
EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **ROMANS 7; 8:1-4.**

Romans 7:1-3. Know you not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the Law), how that the Law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? For the woman which has an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he lives; but if the husband is dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she is married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress, but if her husband is dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she is married to another man. He merely states this as an illustration.

4. Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the Law by the body of Christ; that you should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. While we were under the Law of God, we could not come into the bonds of the New Covenant—the Covenant of Grace. But, through the death of Christ, we are dead to the Law and, therefore, we are set free from the principle and Covenant of Law, and we have come under the Covenant of Grace.

5. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the Law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. Sin is the transgression of the Law of God. Therefore, out of the Law, by reason of our corruption, springs sin. And, in our past lives, we did, indeed, find sin to be very fruitful. It grew very fast in our members and it brought forth much “fruit unto death.”

6. But now we are delivered from the Law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter. No longer is the message to us, “This do and you shall live.” No more are we slaves under bondage, but we have come into a new state—we are free, rejoicing in the glorious liberty of the children of God—and what we now do is done out of a spirit of love, not of fear. We are not seeking after holiness in order to be saved by it, neither do we seek to escape from sin because we are under any fear of being cast into Hell. We have another spirit altogether within us.

7. What shall we say, then? Is the Law of God sin? God forbid! No, so far from being sin, the Law is the great detective of sin, discovering it and letting us know what sin really is.

7, 8. 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. But sin, taking occasion by the commandment, worked in me all manner of concupiscence. Or, “covetousness.” The very fact that God said to us, “Do it not,” worked upon our nature so that we wanted to do it! And that which God commanded, which was a matter of indifference to us while we were in ignorance of His will, became, by reason of the depravity of our hearts, a thing to be resisted just because He had enjoined it upon us. Ah, me, what wicked hearts are ours that fetch evil even out of good!

8, 9. For without the Law, sin was dead. For I was alive without the Law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. “I did not know how sinful I was until God’s commandment came to me. Sin seemed to be dead within me and I thought myself a righteous man. But when the Law of God came home to my heart and conscience, and I understood that even a sinful thought would ruin me, that a hasty word had the essence of murder in it and that the utmost uncleanness might lurk under the cover of what seemed a mere custom of my fellow men— when I found out all this, sin did, indeed, live, but I died so far as righteousness was concerned.”

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! “If I sinned the more when God’s commandment was revealed to me. And if, by the light of the Law, sin was made more apparent to me, and became so exceedingly sinful that it drove me to despair and so to commit still worse sin, the fault was not in the Law, but in sin, and in me, the sinner.”

13, 14. 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. For we know that the Law of God is spiritual. The Law of the Lord is a far higher thing than it seems to be in the esteem of many people. Talk not of it as a mere “Decalogue.” It has far-reaching hands and it affects the secret thoughts and purposes of men. Even their stray imaginations come under its supremacy. “The law is spiritual.”

14. But I am carnal, sold under sin. “I am carnal.” There is the source of all the mischief—a disobedient and rebellious subject, not an irksome Law! The Law is good enough, it is absolutely perfect, “but,” says the Apostle, “I am carnal”—fleshly—“sold under sin.”

15. For that which I do, I allow not. The man himself does that which is evil, but his conscience revolts against it.  
15. For what I would, that I do not; but what I hate, that I do. This is a strange contradiction—a man who has Grace enough to will to do good and yet does it not! There are two men in the one man—the new nature struggling against the old nature. This must be a renewed man who talks in this fashion, or else he could not say that he hated sin! Yet there must be a part of him still imperfect, or else he would not do that which he hates.  
16. If, then, I do that which I would not, I consent unto the Law that it is good. “If I do that against which my will and my conscience rebel, so far, the better part of me acknowledges the goodness of the Law, though the baser part of me rebels against it.”  
17. Now, then, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me. The renewed man still stands out against sin. His heart is not wishful to sin, but that old nature within him will sin even to the end.  
18, 19. 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. Oh, how often have men who have been struggling after holiness had to use these words of the Apostle! The more holy they are, the more they realize that there is still a something better beyond them, after which they struggle, but to which they cannot yet attain! So they cry still, “The good that we would, we do not: but the evil which we would not, that we do.”  
20. Now if I do what I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me. The true man—the newborn man—is struggling after that which is right. The real, “I,” the immortal, “ego,” is still pressing forward like a ship beating up against wind and tide, and striving to reach the harbor where it shall find perfect rest. Oh, what struggles, what contentions, what corrections there are within the men and women in whom the Grace of God is mightily working! Those who have but little Grace can take things easily and swim with the current. But where Grace is mighty, sin will fight for the mastery, though it must ultimately yield, for there can never be any true peace until it is subdued.

21. I find then a Law that when I would do good, evil is present with me. Speaking for myself, I can say that, often, when I am most earnest in prayer, stray thoughts will come into my mind to draw me off from the holy work of supplication. And when I am most intently aiming at humility, then the shadow of pride falls upon me. Do not gracious men generally find it so? If their experience is like that of the Apostle Paul, or like that of many another child of God whose biography one delights to read, it is so and it will always be so.

22-24. 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? These are birth-pangs, the throes and anguish of a regenerated spirit! The Christian man is fighting his way to sure and certain victory so the more of this wretchedness that he feels, the better—if it is only caused by a consciousness that sin is still lurking within him—and that he longs to be rid of it.

25. I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the Law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.  
Romans 8:1. There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Some people talk about “getting out of the 7th Chapter, into the Eighth.” But who made this into an Eighth Chapter? Certainly, the Holy Spirit did not! There are no chapters in the Epistle as He inspired Paul to write it—the whole of it runs straight on without a break—“There is, therefore, now no condemnation”—while struggling, fighting, warring, contending—  
2. For the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. “Has made me free”—that is, the real, “I,” of which he wrote a little while before—the true man, himself. “‘The Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.’ I have broken its bonds, I am a free man. Contending against its usurpation, I have escaped from under its yoke and I shall yet tread sin under my feet, and God shall shortly bruise even Satan himself under my feet.”  
3*.*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 He has done most effectually!  
4. That the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Oh, what a blessed thing it is to walk freely, “not after the flesh, but after the Spirit,” even though, all the while, there is, within the soul this strife that the Apostle has been describing!

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HOLY LONGINGS  
NO. 1586

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 27, 1881, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“My soul breaks with longing for Your Judgments at all times.” Psalm 119:20.**

ONE of the best tests of a man’s character will be found in his deepest and heartiest longings. You cannot always judge a man by what he is doing at any one time, for he may be under constraints which compel him to act contrary to his true self, or he may be under an impulse from which he will soon be free. He may, for a while, back off from that which is evil and yet he may be radically bad. Or he may be constrained by force of temptation to that which is wrong, yet his real self may rejoice in righteousness. A man may not be pronounced to be good because, for the moment, what he is doing may be condemned as evil because, under certain constraints, he may be committing sin. A man’s longings are more inward and more near to his real self than his outward acts—they are more natural, in that they are entirely free and beyond compulsion or restraint.

As a man longs in his heart, so is he. I mean not every idle wish, as I now speak, but strong desires of the heart—these are the true life of a man’s nature. You shall know whether you, yourself, are evil by answering this question. To which have you the greatest desire? Do you continually long after selfish pleasures? Then you are evil beyond all question! Do you sigh to be and feel and do that which is good? Is this the great aim of your life? Then in the core of your being there is some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel. So then, dear Hearers, your heart-longings may furnish you with helps for self-examination and I beg you to apply them, as things of the heart touch the root of the matter. Unbelievers are “a people that do err in their heart” and men truly find the Lord when they “seek Him with their whole heart”—so that the heart is all-important and its longings are among the surest marks of its condition.

Moreover, heart-longings are prophecies of what a man will be. It is not always capacity, if we could ascertain it, which will certify us as to what a man will do, for many men of large abilities achieve nothing for lack of inclination—their talents lie hidden in the earth and, albeit they might have succeeded marvelously well in certain pursuits—they do nothing at all remarkable because they have no tendencies in that direction. An individual may have the means to relieve the poor and yet never perform a charitable act from lack of generosity. Or he may have great mental powers and yet never produce a line of useful literature because he is eaten up with idleness. But other things being equal, the longings of a man are a pretty sure index of what he will be—they cannot create capacity, but they develop it—they lead to the use of means for its increase and they make the mind keen to seize opportunities.

By some means or other a man usually becomes what he intensely longs to be, especially if those desires are formed in early youth while yet the world is all before him where to choose. Hence our proverb—“The child is father to the man.” Even in little children tastes and pursuits have been prophetic—the young artist sketches his sister in the cradle—the youthful engineer is busy with his boyish inventions. If his longings deepen, strengthen and become vehement with the increase of his years, the young man’s character is being molded from within and this is often a greater force than that of circumstances acting from without.

Thus it is in spiritual things—we may form forecasts as to what we shall be from our burning and pressing desires. Desires are the buds out of which words and deeds will ultimately be developed. Spiritual desires are the shadows of coming blessings. What God intends to give us, He first sets us longing for. Therefore the wonderful efficacy of prayer, because prayer is the embodiment of a longing inspired of God because He intends to bestow the blessing! What are your longings, then, my Hearer? Do you long to be holy? The Lord will make you holy! Do you long to conquer sin? You shall overcome it by faith in Jesus!. Are you pining after fellowship with Christ? He will come and make His abode with you! Does your soul thirst, yes, even pant after God as the hart for the water brooks? Then you shall be filled with all His fullness, for all these longings are prophetic of that which is to be, even as the snowdrop and crocus and anemone foretell the approach of Spring.

I say not that it is so with all human wishes, for “the sluggard desires and has nothing” and many a man has such evil cravings within his heart that it were contrary to the purity of God for Him to grant them. But where there are intense, heart-breaking yearnings of a holy order, depend upon it, they are tokens of good things to come! Where the Grace of God reigns in the soul, it makes a man become a stranger among his fellows and it breeds in him peculiar affections and novel desires. The verse which precedes my text runs thus—“I am a stranger in the earth”—he was a king surrounded by courtiers and friends and yet he was not at home, but like one banished from his native land. And being thus a stranger in the earth, he had a remarkable desire which worldlings could not understand and that singular craving he here expresses—“My soul breaks with longing for Your Judgments at all times.”

Worldly men care nothing for the Judgments of God. No, they care nothing for God, Himself! But when a man becomes new born, a citizen of Heaven, there grows up within his spirit a spiritual appetite of which he had felt nothing before—and he longs after God and His holy Word. See to it, Brothers and Sisters, whether your souls cry out for God, for the living God, for again I say, by your longings you may test yourselves—by your heart’s desires you may forecast your future—and by your hungering and thirsting you may judge whether you are men of this world or citizens of the world to come. With such aids to self-judgment, no man ought to remain in doubt as to his spiritual condition and eternal prospects.

In order that we may be helped to the right use of this text, we shall handle it thus—first, we shall notice the saint’s absorbing object—“Your Judgments.” Secondly, we shall reflect upon the saint’s ardent longing— “My soul breaks with longing for Your Judgments.” And, thirdly, we shall mention the saint’s cheering reflections which he may readily draw from the fact that he does experience such inward heart-break. Of these we will speak as the Divine Spirit shall enable us, for without Him we know nothing.

I. First, then, let us think OF THE SAINTS’ ABSORBING OBJECTIVE. They long after God’s Judgments. The word, “Judgments,” is here used as synonymous with the, “Word of God.” It does not mean those Judgments of God with which He smites sinners and executes the sentence of His Law, but it refers to the revealed will or declared Judgments of God. All through this long Psalm the writer is speaking of the Word of God, the Law of God, the testimonies, the precepts, the statutes of God—and here the word, “Judgments,” is used in the same sense. Perhaps I shall give you the meaning pretty readily if I remind you that the Commandments and doctrines of the Word are God’s Judgments about moral and spiritual things—His decisions as to what is right and what is wrong—and His solutions of the great problems of the universe.

God’s revealed plan of salvation is God’s decision upon man’s destiny— God’s judgment of condemnation against human sin—and yet His judgment of justification on behalf of believing sinners whom He regards as righteous through faith in Jesus Christ. The Bible may be rightly regarded as the book of Divine Judgments, the recorded sentences of the High Court of Heaven, the Infallible decision of perfect holiness upon questions which concern our souls—

*“This is the Judge that ends the strife  
Where wit and reason fail.  
Our guide through devious paths of life,*

*Our shield when doubts assail.”*  
You may come to the Scriptures as men came to the throne of Solomon, where hard cases were at once met. But a greater than Solomon is here! Search God’s Word and you will have before your eyes the ultimate judgment of unerring Truth, the last decree from the supreme Authority from which there is no appeal! The Bible contains the verdicts of the Judge of all the earth, the Judgments of God who cannot lie and cannot err.

Thus God’s Word is rightly called His “Judgments.” It is a book not to be judged by us, but to be our judge—not a word of it may be altered or questioned—but to it we may constantly refer as to a court of appeal whose sentence is decisive. David in our text tells us how he desired the Lord’s Judgments, or His Word by which we understand, first, that he greatly reverenced the Word of God. He was not among those who regard the Bible as only a very important portion of human literature, but as being no more Inspired than the works of Shakespeare or Bacon. Little as David had of the Scriptures, he had a solemn reverence for what he had and stood in awe of it. I have no objection to honest criticism of the keenest kind, but I am shocked at certain Divines who cut and carve the blessed Word of God as if it were some vile carcass given over to their butchery.

When learned men handle the words of this Book, let them not forget whose Book it is and whose words they are that they are examining! There is a near approach to blasphemy against God Himself in irreverence to His Word. There is no book like this for authority and majesty—it is hedged about with solemn sanctions so that it has both a wall of fire round about it and a glory in its midst to make it distinct from all other writings. All other books might be heaped together in one pile and burned—as the Muslims burned the Alexandrian Library—with less loss to the world than would be occasioned by the total obliteration of a single

 page of the sacred volume! All other books are at the best but as gold leaf, whereof it takes acres to make an ounce of the precious metal. But this Book is solid gold! It contains ingots, masses, mines, yes, whole worlds of priceless treasure, nor could its contents be exchanged for pearls, rubies, or the “terrible crystal” itself.

Even in the mental wealth of the wisest men there are no jewels like the Truths of Revelation. Oh, Sirs, the thoughts of men are vanity, the conceptions of men are low and groveling at their best—and He who has given us this Book has said, “My thoughts are not your thoughts; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My thoughts higher than your thoughts.” Let it be to you and to me a settled matter that the Word of the Lord shall be honored in our minds and enshrined in our hearts! Let others speak as they may, “our soul breaks with longing for the Lord’s Judgments.” We could sooner part with all that is sublime and beautiful, cheering or profitable in human literature than lose a single syllable from the mouth of God.

But more—inasmuch as the Psalmist greatly reverenced God’s Word, he intensely desired to know its contents. He had not much of it—probably only the five books of Moses—but the Pentateuch was enough to fill his whole soul with delight. Never depreciate, I pray you, the Old Testament! Remember that the great things that are said in the Psalms about the Word of God were not spoken concerning the New Testament, which was not then written—although they may most fitly be applied by us to the entire series of Inspired Books, yet they were originally spoken only concerning the first five of them—so that the first part of the Bible, according to the Holy Spirit’s own testimony, is to be valued beyond all price.

Indeed, the substance of the New Testament is in the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy—there shut up like Noah in the ark or hidden like Moses in his mother’s house. The lovely form of queenly Truth is there, only her veil conceals her countenance. The clearer shining of the New Testament is not a different light, nor perhaps is it, in itself, brighter—it shines through a thinner medium and, therefore, more fully enlightens us. If I might venture to compare one part of God’s Word with another, I have even thought that the first books are the deepest and that if we had but skill to find it out, we should discover within them a more condensed mass of Revelation than even in the New Testament! I will not defend the opinion, but usually the lower strata, though most hidden, are the most dense and certainly that which is most easy to be understood is not, therefore, of necessity the fullest of meaning, but the reverse.

The various books of Scripture do not increase in real value, they only advance in their adaptation to us. The Light is the same, but the lantern is clearer and we see more. The treasure of the Gospel is contained in the mines of the Books of Moses and I do not wonder, therefore, that David, instinctively knowing it to be there, but not being able to reach it, felt a great longing after it. He was not so well able to get at the Truths of God as we are since he had not the life of Christ to explain the types, nor Apostolic explanations to open up the symbols of the Law and, therefore, he sighed inwardly and felt a killing heartbreak of desire to reach that which he knew was laid up in store for him. He saw the jewelry box, but could not find the key!

If he had not been sure that the treasure was there, he would not have cried, “Open You my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Your Law.” But he was like a voyager on the verge of a discovery who, nevertheless, cannot quite reach it. He was like Columbus out at sea with the fruits of an unknown continent floating beneath his keel but the wind did not favor his reaching the shore. He was like a miner whose pick has struck upon a lump of metal and he is sure that gold is there, but he cannot get it away from the quartz in which it is embedded. The more certain he is that it is there and the harder it is to reach, the more insatiable does his desire become to possess the treasure! Hence I see the reasonableness of the Psalmist’s vehement passion and I marvel not that he cried, “My soul breaks with longing for Your Judgments at all times.”

But I am sure that David did not merely want to know as a matter of intellectual pleasure, but wished to feed upon God’s Word and what a very different thing that is, that feeding upon the Word of God, from the bare knowledge of it! You can teach a child many chapters out of the Bible and yet it may not have fed on a word of it. I have known persons to be so foolish as to set it as a punishment for a child to learn a portion of Scripture. I call this foolish and surely it is also wicked to make the Word of God into a punishment—as well turn the Temple into a prison! Undoubtedly many know the history, the doctrine and the letter of God’s Word as well as others know their Homer or their Virgil and, so far, so good. But oh, to feed upon the Word of God is quite another thing!

An oven full of bread is well enough, but for nourishment, a loaf on the table is better and a morsel in the mouth is better, still! And if the mouthfuls are well digested and taken up into the system they are, then, best of all! In like manner, Truths of God in a sermon are to be valued, but the Truths of God attentively heard comes nearer to practical benefit and Truth of God believed is better, still! And Truths of God absorbed into the spiritual system are best of all! Alas, I fear we are not so absorbent as we ought to be. I like to see men who can be spiritual sponges of God’s Truth—suck it right up and take it into themselves! It would be well, however, that they would not be so far like sponges as to part with the Truth when the hands of the world attempt to wring it out of them!

I say we are not receptive enough, Brothers and Sisters, and that because our hearts are not in tune with God. Do we not feel, at times, that certain doctrines of the Word are hardly to our mind? We do not quite agree with the Divine Judgments on this or that—we dare not question their rightness—but we rather wish they were different. Friends, this must not be so any longer! All that kind of feeling must be gone! We must agree with God in all that He has spoken and let our belief run side by side with the teaching of the Lord. It is high time that we were altogether agreed with God. “Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world?” “Know you not that we shall judge angels?” We shall sit, at the Last Great Day, as assessors with Christ in the great assize to judge the fallen spirits! Does it not become us to be of the same mind with our Lord? Should we not delight in His Word even now that we may the more heartily say, “Amen,” to His verdict from the Great White Throne?

Our judgment must be daily more and more conformed to the Judgments of God which are laid down in Scripture and there must, at any rate, be in our spirit a longing after holiness until we delight in the Law of the Lord and meditate therein both day and night. We shall grow to the likeness of that which we feed upon—heavenly food will make us heavenly-minded! The Word of God received into the heart changes us into its own nature and, by rejoicing in the decisions of the Lord, we learn to judge after His Judgment and to delight ourselves in that which pleases Him. This sense, I think, comes nearer to the explanation of David’s intense longing. Doubtless, he longed to obey God’s Word—he wished in everything to do the will of God without fault either of omission or of commission. He prays in another place, “Teach me Your Law perfectly.”

Do you, my Hearer, long after perfection in that same fashion? All that truly know God must have a mighty yearning to run in the way of the Lord’s Commandments. He does not live before God who does not crave to live like God. There is no regeneration where there are no aspirations after holiness. The actual practice of obedience is necessary as a proof of the possession of true Grace, for the rule is invariable, “By their fruits you shall know them.” No man knows the Word of God till he obeys it—“If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine.”

The Psalmist also longed to feel the power of God’s Judgments in his own heart. You know something about this, my Friend, if the Spirit of God has had dealings with you. Have you not felt the Lord judging you in the chamber of your conscience? The Spirit comes by the Word of God and sets our iniquities before us, our secret sins in the light of His Countenance. You had forgotten the wrong, or at least you hardly remembered it as a sin—but suddenly you saw it all. As I have looked upon a landscape under a cloudy sky, a gleam of sunlight has suddenly fallen upon one portion of it and made it stand out brilliantly from the midst of the surrounding gloom—so has the Holy Spirit poured a clear light upon some one act or set of acts of my life and I have seen it as I never saw it before.

That inner Light has judged us and led us to seek fresh cleansing—the Judgments of God have come into our souls and led us anew to cry for mercy. I have found it so, have you? The sins of our youth and our former transgressions have been judged of the Lord within us. I do not think that David fully recognized all the sins of his youth till he had become an old man and, alas, many who have sinned in ways in which he never erred have failed to know the evil of their transgressions till in their bones and in their flesh they have felt its terrible effects years afterwards! The Lord will judge His people and make sin bitter to them! Ought we to wish for this? I say, Yes! Every true man should feel a longing in his soul to have every sin within him exposed, condemned and executed. He should wish to hide nothing, but that it would be revealed and he be humbled by the sight.

There are two judgments, one of which we must undergo—either judgment in the forum of the conscience, or else judgment before the Great White Throne at last. You must either condemn yourself or be condemned! A court of arraigns must be held in your heart and you must be tried, cast and condemned in your own soul or else you will not fully know the Judgments of the Lord, or truly seek pardon at His hands. God justifies the men who condemn themselves and none but these shall ever obtain the righteousness which is of God by faith. Therefore we may long for stripping judgments that we may obtain the robe of Righteousness! We may cry to be emptied that Grace may fill us! David desires that God’s Word would come right into him and hold its court and judge and try him—and he came to feel this process to be so necessary and so salutary that his soul broke with the longing which he had to be dealt with by God after this fashion.

This is wisdom and prudence when a man so desires sanctification that he is straitened till painful processes are being carried on by which his purity is to be produced. It is a wise child that will, for the sake of health, even long to take the appointed medicine! God’s children are not far from being well when they have reached such a point of sacred judgment! This is the wish of all true Believers—to be perfectly conformed to the Word of God. Some of us can honestly say that we would not have a second wish for ourselves if our heavenly Father would grant us this one—that we might be perfect even as He is. We would leave all other matters with Him as to wealth or poverty, health or sickness, honor or shame, life or death if He would but give us complete conformity to His will. This is the objective of the craving, yearning and sighing of our souls. We hunger to be holy!

Here I must correct myself as to our one desire, for surely, if the Lord would make us holy we should then desire that all other men would be the same! Oh that the world were converted to God! Oh that the Truth of God would go forth like the brightness of the morning! Would God that every error and superstition might be chased away like bats and owls before the rising of the sun! O God, Your servants long for this! We ask for nothing except these two things—first reign, O Lord, in the triple kingdom of our nature—and then reign over ALL nature! Let the whole earth be filled with Your Glory and our prayers are ended! I hope that in this sense our soul breaks for the longing which it has towards God’s Judgments.

II. And now, secondly, let us think of THE SAINT’S ARDENT LONGINGS. First, let me say of these longings that they constitute a living experience, for dead things have no aspirations or cravings. You shall visit the graveyard and exhume all the bodies you please, but you shall find neither desire nor craving! Longing lingers not within a lifeless corpse. Where the heart is breaking with desire, there is life. This may comfort some of you—you have not attained, as yet, to the holiness you desire, but you long for it—ah, then you are a living soul, the life of God is in you! You have not yet come to be conformed to the precept, but oh how you wish you were—that wish proves that a spark of the Divine Life is in your soul.

The stronger that longing becomes, the stronger is the life from which it springs—a feeble life has feeble desires—a vigorous life has vehement desires, burning like coals of juniper! Are you earnestly longing this morning? Can you say that your heart pines for God as the watcher through the midnight sighs for the dawn, or as the traveler over burning sand longs for the shadow of a great rock? Oh, then, though I would not have you rest in longings—and indeed, I know you never can—yet they are a proof that you are spiritually alive! Heart-longings are far better tests than attendance at sacraments, for men who are dead in sin have dared to come both to Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Eager desires prove spiritual life much better than supposed attainments, for these supposed attainments may all be imaginary—but a heart breaking for the longing which it has to God’s Word is no fancy—it is a fact too painful to be denied!

Next, remember the expression used in our text represents a humble sense of imperfection. David had not yet come to be completely conformed to God’s Words, nor yet to know them perfectly, or else he would not have said that he longed for them. So it is with us. We have not reached perfection, but do not let us, therefore, be discouraged, for the Apostle of the Gentiles said, “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.” And the man after God’s own heart, even David, when he was at his best, and I think he was so when he was writing this blessed Psalm, says not so much that he had obtained anything as that he longed after it, not so much that he had yet grasped it, but sighed for it—“my soul breaks for the longing that it has.”

I do not envy those who have no more longings, who have reached so divine a height that they can climb no higher. I heard of one who said his will was so perfectly resigned to the will of God that in fact he had no will and so he had given up prayer, having nothing to seek! This is stupid talk! When a man gets so full of life that he no longer breathes, I should say that he is dead! Prayer is the breath of the soul and he that can do without it is dead in sin. When a man thinks himself so good that he cannot be better, he is probably so bad that he could not be worse. That is the judgment which caution will pronounce upon him, for all good men long to be better—and better men desire to be best of all that they may dwell in Heaven! The more Grace the saints have, the more they desire—sacred greed is begotten by the possession of the love of God—“My soul breaks with longing for Your Judgments.”

Furthermore, the expression of the text indicates an advanced experience. Augustine dwells upon this idea, for he rightly says that at first there is an aversion in the heart to God’s Word and desire after it is a matter of growth. After aversion is removed, there often comes an indifference in the heart—it is no longer opposed to godliness, but it does not care to possess it. Then, through Divine Grace, there springs up in the soul a sense of the beauty of God’s Word and will and an admiration of holiness. This leads on to a measure of desire after the good thing and a degree of appetite for it. But it shows a considerable growth in Grace when we ardently long after it and a still larger growth when the soul breaks because of these longings! It is a blessed thing when the soul is so stretched with desire that it is ready to snap, or when, like a vessel full of fermenting liquor, the working within threatens to break up the vessel altogether.

The text represents the agonizing of an earnest soul. Such a state of things shows a considerable advancement in the Divine Life, but when a Believer has those desires at all times, then is he not far from being a fullgrown Christian. “Oh,” you say, “He thinks so little of what he has that he is crushed under the burden of desire for more.” Yes, and he is the very man who has most of spiritual wealth! Those desires are mysterious entries in the account book of his heart and rightly read they prove his wealth, for in the Divine Life, the more a man desires, the more he has already obtained! You may make tallies of your desires and as you reckon by those tallies, they shall tell you to a penny what your spiritual wealth is. The more full a man is of Grace, the more he hungers for Grace! Strange it is to say so, but the paradox is true—the more he drinks and the more he is satisfied and ceases to thirst in one sense, the more is he devoured with thirst after the living God!

It is an advanced experience, then, and it is an experience which I cannot quite describe to you except by saying that it is a bitter sweet or, rather, a sweet bitter, if the adjective is to be stronger than the noun! There is a bitterness about being crushed with desire. It is inevitable that there should be, but the aroma of this bitter herb is inexpressibly sweet— no perfume can excel it! After all, a bruised heart knows more peace and rest than a heart filled with the world’s delights. How safe such a soul is. “Oh,” said one, “I cannot go to Hell, it is impossible, because I love Jesus Christ and long after Him. It is not possible for Him to forbid me the privilege of loving Him and to love Him and long for Him is happiness!” Better to feel a heavenly hunger than a worldly fullness! Heartbreak for God is a sweeter thing than content in sinful pleasures! There is an inexpressible sweetness, a dawning of Heaven, in longing after God and yet, because you feel you have not yet attained what you desire, there is a bitter mixed with it.

I think the only thing that honey needs to improve it is just a touch of bitter or acid in it. When you eat much honey it begins to taste bad because it is all sweet, but just a taste of lemon or a dash of quassia might strengthen the taste and enable it to take in a fresh freight of sweetness. It is surely so with true religious experience. Pangs of strong desire increase our overflowing pleasures and the longings and hungering make attaining and enjoying to be all the more delightful. May the Lord send us more of this lamb with bitter herbs, this mingled experience in which we are “sorrowful, yet always rejoicing!”

Still, those longings after God’s Word may become very wearing to a man’s soul. The sense of our text in the Hebrew is that of attrition or wearing down. Keble reads it—

*“My soul is worn and wasted quite,*

*Your Laws desiring day and night.”*  
They wear out the man when they become so fervent as those confessed in the text. I believe that some of the Lord’s holy ones have been worn down to sickness and depression by the passion of their hearts after God—their souls have become like sharp swords which cut through their scabbards, for they have destroyed the body by intense inner desires. At times holy men draw so near to God and pine so greatly after His Glory that for half a word they would pass the frontier and enter into Heaven! They are so fully in accord with God that the shell which shuts in their soul is almost broken and the newborn spirit is ready for its fullest life and liberty. How blessed to shake off the last fragment of that which holds us back from the freedom of an immortal life in perfect agreement with God! Oh to attain to this!

One saint cried, “Let me see the face of God,” and another answered, “You cannot see God’s face and live!” To which he replied, “Then let me see my God and die.” So do we feel that our soul comes near to dying with her longings after her God. Little would we tremble, even if we knew that the joy of realization would be killing and would pass us over the border into Immanuel’s land where we shall see the King in His beauty! But I must not linger though there is much to tempt me to speak on. Are you searching yourselves, Brothers and Sisters, to see whether you have such longings? If so, do you have them, “at all times”? We are not to long for God’s Word and will by fits and starts—we are not to have desires awakened by novelty or by excitement. Nor are we to long for Divine things because for a while temporal things fail us and we are sick and sorry and weary of the world—and so, in disgust, turn to God.

Brethren, I trust you long after God when all is bright in Providence and that you love His Word when all is pleasant in family affairs. It is well to desire the Lord’s will when He is permitting you to have your own will as well as when He is thwarting you. God is to always be our delight. He is our defense in war, but He is also our joy in peace. Do not use Him as sailors use those harbors of refuge for which they are not bound, into which they only run into in time of storm, but if it is fair they stand far out to sea! The Lord’s will is to be the path of our feet and the element of our life. This it is to be a true child of God—to always have a yearning soul towards God’s Word—to be eager after His Commandments “at all times.” May the Holy Spirit keep us ever hungering and thirsting after God and His Truth.

III. And now I am going to close with a few cheering reflections. I think this morning some heart has been saying, “There are comforting thoughts for me in all this. I am a poor thing. I have not grown much. I have not done much. I wish I had, but I do have strong longings. I am very dissatisfied and I am almost ready to die with desire for Christ.” My dear Soul, listen—let this encourage you! First, God is at work in your soul. Never did a longing after God’s Word grow up in the soul of itself. Weeds come up of themselves, but the rarer kind of plants, I guarantee you, will never be found where there has been no sowing! And this flower, called Love-LiesBleeding—this plant of intense eagerness after God—never sprang up in the human breast of itself! God has placed it there!

Friend, there was a time when you had no such longings. Ah, and if you were left to yourself, you would never have such longings again! You would decline till you became as content with the world as others are. You know you would! Come, then, Beloved, God is at work in your soul—let this comfort you. The great Potter has you upon the wheel—He has not cast you away as worthless—His work may pain you, but it is honorable and glorious. Your heart may swell with unutterable longings and it may be torn by throes of desire, but life thus proves its presence and reaches forth to something yet beyond. These pains of desire are the Lord’s doings and they should be perceived with gratitude.

The result of God’s work is very precious. Come, though it is only a gracious desire, thank God for it. Though you can get no further than holy longing, be grateful for that longing. I would have you strive for the highest gifts, but I would not have you despise what God has already given you! I have known times when I thought myself in a very strange case and I judged ill of myself. Yet a month or two afterwards I have looked back upon that condition which I condemned and I have wished that I could return to it! Has it not been so with you? You have been racked with sighs, groans, cravings and other forms of unrest and you have said, “O God, deliver me from this sore travail!” But when, within a week, you have had to lament insensibility and lukewarmness, you have cried, “Lord, put me back into my state of desire! Lord, set me hungering and thirsting again, a fierce appetite is better than this deadness.”

Oh, you that are longing, be thankful that you are, for you have a rich promise to cheer you, since it is written, “He will fulfill the desire of them that fear Him.” The more wretched and unhappy you are under a sense of sin, the more grateful you ought to be for tenderness of heart. And the more you are longing to lay on Christ and to become like Christ, the more you should thank God that He has worked this longing in you. How sweet is that Word of God, “Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble: You will prepare their heart, You will cause Your ear to hear.” Listen, once again—not only is the desire precious, but it is leading on to something more precious! Hear that which is written—“The desire of the righteous shall be granted.”

What do you say to such words as these? “He will regard the prayer of the destitute and not despise their prayer.” “When the poor and needy seek water and there is none, and their tongue fails for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.” Do you think that God prompts us to desire a thing which He does not mean to bestow upon us? Is that the way you treat your children? I know you will play with the little ones, sometimes, and hold a nut or a penny in your closed hand and bid them open your fingers for themselves. But you give them their treat before long. You would not hold a sweetmeat before a poor child and promise it to him and excite his desires for it and then refuse him a taste of it—that were a cruel pastime! God is not unkind—if He makes you hunger, for that hunger He has made ready the Bread of Heaven! If He makes you thirst—for that thirst He has already filled the river of the Water of Life! If the desire comes from God, the supply of that desire will as certainly come from God! Rest you sure of that and cry mightily to Him with strong faith in His goodness.

Meanwhile, the desire, itself, is doing you good. It is driving you out of yourself. It is making you feel what a poor creature you are, for you can dig no well in your own nature and find no supplies within your own spirit. It is compelling you to look only to God. Do not need much compelling—come readily to your Lord! Be one of those vessels which can sail with a capful of wind! Come by faith to Jesus, even though you fear that your desires are by no means so vivid and intense as those of my text. Believe and you shall be established! Rest assured of this, that there is in God whatever your soul needs! In Christ Jesus dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily and in that Divine fullness there must of necessity be more than a creature can require! In Christ Jesus there is exactly what your soul is panting for.

Yes, I mean you weakest ones of the flock! You feeblest of the saints! You who dare not put your names down among God’s people at all! If there is a sacred longing in your spirit, there is that in Christ which is adapted to you in spite of your feebleness and unworthiness. God is ready to give you whatever you are ready to receive. Only come and trust Him for it and look to His dear Son, for in Jesus you have all things. Oh, this is the blessedness of this longing after God’s Judgments, that it makes Christ precious! And, with that remark, I have done.

We see all God’s Word in Christ. We see all God’s decisions against sin and for righteousness embodied in our Savior. We see that if we can get Christ we have then found the Wisdom of God and the power of God and, in fact, the All-Sufficiency of God! If we can become like Christ we shall be like God Himself. This, I say, makes Christ so precious and makes us long to more fully know Him and call Him ours! Come, you longing ones, come to my Lord Jesus even now! Come, you that are bursting with wishes and desires, come and trust the Savior and rest in Him now! And may this be the hour in which you shall find how true it is, “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.” May you yet sing the Virgin’s song, “He has filled the hungry with good things. My soul does magnify the Lord.”

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1350 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

ENLIVENING AND INVIGORATING  
NO. 1350

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.  
“Quicken me according to Your Word.”  
Psalm 119:25.

You will frequently find David uttering this petition. It is a favorite prayer of his, “Quicken me, O Lord!” And, as David was like the rest of us—indeed, his experience is the mirror of the experience of all Believers— you may depend upon it, we all have a great need to pray as he did, “Quicken me, O Lord!” If he felt a coldness and deadness frequently stealing over him, so do we. Did he find it hard to endure such a wretched state? So ought we, also, to loathe and abhor it. And as he cried to the Strong for strength and knew that quickening must come from God, we ought to know—I trust we know—the same resource under the same necessity. Therefore, let it be our prayer now and let the prayer be repeated often—“Quicken me, O Lord, according to Your Word.”

How are we to understand this quickening? It means, of course, making alive, keeping alive, and giving more life—in a word, enlivening. He was alive—he was a spiritual man, or else he would not have asked for life. Dead men never pray, “Quicken me.” It is a sign that there is life, already, when a man is able to say, “Give me life, O Lord!” This is not the prayer of the unconverted! It is the prayer of a man who is already regenerate and has the love of God in his soul—“Quicken me, O Lord, according to Your Word.” Quickening, of course, comes to us, first, by regeneration. It is then that we receive spiritual life. And as there is no natural life in the world except that of which God is the Author, so assuredly in the new world there is no spiritual life except that which God has created.

The first quickening is that which comes upon us when we begin to feel our need of a Savior, when we begin to perceive the preciousness of that Savior and when, with a feeble finger, we touch the hem of the Savior’s garment. Then are we quickened into newness of life! But that spiritual life needs to be kept alive. It is like the life of a fire which must be fed with fuel and supported with air. It is like our natural life which needs food to sustain it and needs to breathe the atmosphere in order to its continuance. We are as much creatures of God’s power in our continuing to live as in our commencing to live! And, spiritually, we owe as much to Divine Grace that we remain Believers as that we became Believers. As soon as we get spiritual life, this prayer is most proper as a sacred instinct, “Lord, continue this life in my soul, continue to quicken me, for, if You do not, I have no life in myself apart from You and I would die were I severed from You, as does a branch when severed from the vine. Continue therefore, good Lord, to quicken me.”

Obviously, too, some special invigoration and excitement of life must be implied here. The trees, all through the winter, are alive. Their substance is in them when they cast their leaves. The vitality is not extinct, though our poet of “The Seasons” does sing*—*

*“How dead the vegetable kingdom lies:*

*How dumb the tuneful choir!”*  
A Divine act of power secretly maintains the life, hidden away till spring comes. Then the chains of frost are broken, the genial warmth begins to light upon the sealed buds, the sap flows and the trees, in their reviving tints and bursting buds, give such promise of returning foliage and flower that in a very special sense they may be said to be quickened. As soon as the sap begins to rise, the buds swell, the leaves unwrap themselves and the concealed flowers gradually open—a quickening comes over what was alive and what had been kept alive all through its dreary, wintry time.

So, Beloved, you see, first of all, God gives us life then He maintains life. And then, at times and seasons, (would to God they were more frequent and without intermission!), He gives vigor to that life so that it becomes more manifest and mighty. And then it is that in a conspicuous manner the quickening is seen. I would to God that He would lead some poor sinner to pray in the very first sense of the word, “Lord, quicken me! Give me life!” It would be a sign that life was coming! I would that every Christian would incessantly pray the prayer in the second sense— “Quicken me, Lord”—that is, “Continually keep me faithful and true to Your Word.” And then, thirdly, I would that we would all go on to the third sense and say, “Lord, inspirit me, revive me, lift me up unto a higher life. Fill me with more of Your Holy Spirit and so make me more truthful and more like Your ever living Son Jesus, who has life in Himself.”

Having thus introduced to you the prayer, I would use the Psalm to explain it—to explain, rather, the experience which commends the prayer to our constant use. First, Brothers and Sisters, I would assign some reasons why you need quickening. Secondly, I would point out some motives to see it. Thirdly, we shall mention some ways in which it is worked. And, fourthly, we will suggest pleas such as the Psalmist used, for obtaining it.

I. THERE ARE MANY REASONS WHY WE SHOULD SEEK QUICKENING. You cannot overlook that confessed in the text—because of the deadening influence of this world—“My soul cleaves unto the dust: quicken me according to Your Word.” We are surrounded with dust. We are associated with dust. The best and brightest things that are in this world are made of dust. And as for ourselves, although we have within us a new and higher life that has no fraternity with the dust, there is an old life belonging to us which is brother to the dust—which says to the worm, “You are my sister.” “Dust you are, and unto dust you shall return,” is true of every one of us.

Yet, Beloved, we cannot feed on the dust—that is the serpent’s meat—it is not ours. The new life in us craves for something higher, but the old nature tries to be content with dust. It clings to it—the dust cleaves to it and it cleaves to the dust. You know how the care and cross, the work and worry of a busy day will often dampen your ardor in prayer and disqualify your thoughts for devout meditation? You cannot think much of treasure laid up in Heaven if you think a great deal of this world’s goods.

Riches are often a dangerous encumbrance to those who seek after righteousness. They steal the heart away from God. Matthew Henry, in his own sharp style, warns us that the care in getting, the fear in keeping, the temptation in using, the guilt in abusing, the sorrow in losing and the responsibility of giving account for gold and silver, houses and lands, accumulate a heavy burden for him to bear who would have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward man. And yet if you have but little of this world’s wealth, you will find poverty a trying ordeal. The cares of poverty, like those of property, often break the calm repose which our faith ought to enjoy.

If things go smoothly with you in business, then those smooth, deceitful streams bear you away from God. And, if they go roughly with you, then in the deep and in the storm you are too apt to forget the Lord or to murmur against His Providence. There is nothing in this world to help a Christian—it is all against him! The world holds us to itself as tightly as it can—it acts like bird-lime to us. When we would mount on the wings of eagles, we are often like the eagle that you see in the gardens where they keep such creatures—there is a chain on our foot and we cannot rise. Our soul cleaves to the dust.

Now, as this is the case and as you cannot get out of the world, pray that you may rise superior to its influence. You men of business, you heads of families, you who guide and you who follow, you who are sociable and you who are solitary—all of you must still be in the world and mix with men of the world—therefore cry to God, yes, cry mightily, “Lord, deliver us from the deadening influence of the world in which we live! Quicken us, we beseech You, from day to day!”

A second reason for our need of quickening lies in the influence of vanity—of that which is actually sinful. Refer to the 37th verse—“Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken me in Your way.” As we go about in the world we see a great deal of that which is injurious to us. The sins of others leave some kind of stain upon the conscience. I question whether you can read a newspaper and scan the story of a murder or a robbery, or survey with more distant glance in any book of history the sin of your fellow men without being, in a degree, injured. We are compelled to see much of vanity and sin in our daily callings. We do not merely read of profanity but we hear the oaths.

You enter into a railway carriage and you cannot always avoid hearing conversation which is the reverse of pure. You go into your house and, unless you are happily situated so that all are Christians, there will be a great deal of which you cannot approve and which can be of no benefit to your soul. Besides, the whole world runs after its own idols—men each seek his own, and not the things of Christ—and all these things are vanity. “Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, all is vanity.”

Our eyes are often fascinated by the glitter and the glare of these vanities. The world puts on a very beauteous complexion. She attires her head and paints her face like Jezebel. And it is not always easy, like Jehu, to

detest her, and to say, “Fling her down, and let the dogs consume her.” We have nothing to do with this vain world! We are not citizens of this land! But, truly, Madam Bubble, as Bunyan calls her, with her purse and her person, continually presenting herself, is enough to make even Standfast, himself, to stagger and even he needs to fall on his knees, and cry, “Quicken Me, O Lord, and turn away my eyes from beholding vanity.”

There is thus a second good reason why we should seek for quickening. Sometimes we shall have need to cry for quickening because we are surrounded by deceivers. Turn to the 87th and 88th verses—“They had almost consumed me upon earth; but I forsook not Your Precepts. Quicken me after Your loving kindness; so shall I keep the testimony of Your mouth.” If you are often assailed by foes and if those foes happen to be the men of your own household—if they jeer at your faith, if they make a jest of holiness on purpose to pain you—you will need a great deal of Divine Grace not to be ruffled.

To always be a dove—to be a dove in the midst of ravens. To always be a lamb—to be a lamb in the midst of wolves—is not so easy. He must have much spiritual life who shall be able, wisely and discreetly, to behave himself in the midst of those who lie in wait to entrap him in every word that he says. Remember how David acted in the court of Saul, when Saul eyed him. Unsullied purity is the safest policy. Though Saul eyed David, he could not see any fault or rake up any charge that he could bring against him. Oh, that all of you young people, especially those of you who are subjected to scorn and contempt because of your fidelity to Christ, may be doubly blessed with Grace—may you be, indeed, quickened to the full spiritual life that you may stand the test of persecution and reproach, of suspicion and disparagement, of misrepresentation and slander which is sure to come upon you!

Do not pray to be rid of the grievance—rather rejoice that you are counted worthy to suffer shame for your Savior’s sake! You may pray, if you like, that the distress may be lightened because your strength is small. You may pray that your flight is not in the winter—but do not make that the special object of your petition. Rather pray for Grace to endure it! Pray for life, spiritual life, that you may throw it off. I suppose that, in order to prevent disease, it is a good thing to remove the cause of the disease and take away everything that produces ill savors in the air. But the sure thing is for the man himself to be vigorous as to his own life.

I have no doubt many die in moderately healthy localities because they have no stamina. They are constitutionally weak, while the young man who is in robust health may even pass through a pestiferous district and be for hours in the midst of malaria without falling a prey to its deadly influence. And this simply because the life that is in him resists the disease. Your business, dear Friend, if you live in the midst of those that are set on fire by Hell—those who pour out venom against you, is to pray— “Lord, quicken me that I may have so much spiritual life that these evil influences may not be ruinous to me. Deliver me from them when it is Your will, but meanwhile let me have such a full tide of life that I may be able to endure what I must encounter without being injured.”

Another reason for seeking quickening will be found in the 107th verse: “I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O Lord, according unto Your Word.” In seasons of affliction we are very apt to fall into a dark, cold, dead state of mind. We have known many persons in poverty. I have often been sorely pained by it—when members of this Church, who have much, become very poor—and have given up attendance at the House of God. I could understand their reasons far better than I could appreciate them. Their pride was doubtless wounded, because they could not dress as they used to do, though I am sure nobody here thinks any better of you for dressing yourselves in fine clothes. I do not think so much of you, myself.

As they could not dress quite so well they felt they could not mix as they did with some with whom they were once equal in circumstances. So they have gone out by the wayside. It is a sad thing when they do so. I am much saddened by it. I hope none of you ever will. You ought to think that you will be more welcome at the House of God when you are in trouble than you ever were before! And if you lose your earthly possessions, it is all the more reason why you should seek to hold faster to the riches which are above.

If you are in pain, too, that kind of affliction has a great tendency to distract the mind. Who can think when the brow is throbbing? Who can be calm when every vein becomes a road for the hot feet of pain to travel on? It is not easy. Well now, we have reason, when we feel weak, when we feel that the mind is suffering in sympathy with the body, to cry, “Lord, let Grace triumph over nature. Let Your Spirit have power—Your blessed comforting Spirit—to lift me up above the weight which now is laid upon me, that I may glory in tribulation because Your power rests upon me.”

You look upon a weight as a heavy matter which keeps you down, but mechanics know how to make a weight raise you. A little adjustment of ropes and pulleys and such-like contrivances, and the weight shall lift you up! And the Lord knows how to make our afflictions minister to our quickening, as we shall have to show you directly. But in themselves they deaden us. They do not assist, but rather hinder and so, whenever they come, then is the time for us to pray with special emphasis, “Quicken me, O Lord, according to Your Word.” Thus have I endeavored to show you from the Psalm itself some of the reasons why we need quickening.

II. Now, let us pass on to describe SOME OF THE MOTIVES FOR SEEKING QUICKENING. There are very many. Seek it because of what you are. You are a Christian and, therefore, already alive unto God. Life seeks more life—it is its natural tendency. If there is life in a tree, it seeks to put forth its branches. And when it has had its spring growth spurt, you will notice that it then begins to seek for its midsummer spurt. And when the midsummer growth is over, the tree always has an eye to the growth of the next spring! And before the old leaves go there is every preparation made for the new leaves. Life is always aiming at more life. It a law of Nature. There is a propagation continually progressing in which life develops and multiplies itself. Now, if you have the life implanted by

the Holy Spirit, you will long for more. If you do not long to have more life, it surely must be because you have no life. The living man will be sure to cry to God that he may have life more abundantly.

The next motive is not only because of what you are, but because of what you ought to be. Here is a question for you which I will leave you to answer—“What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?” We like, sometimes, to work out a problem. There is one to solve. Draw a picture, if you can, of what you ought to be. I will tell you, if you draw that picture accurately, what it will be like. It will be like Jesus Christ! That is the answer to this question—“What manner of persons ought we to be?”

Now Christ was full of life. Although He did not strive or cry, or lift up His voice, or cause it to be heard in the streets by way of seeking after popular notoriety, yet what life was in Him! He was brimful of life! There was nothing stagnant, indifferent, or purposeless in any of His actions or in all His career. Why, the life of Christ was so full that it seemed to flow out even onto His garments, so that when they touched His garments, virtue went out of Him! How full must He have been of the living force—the inward power! O Beloved, we ought to be so! As we are redeemed, as we are quickened by Christ—as we are members of His body, as we belong to Him—we ought to reckon ourselves dead unto sin, but alive unto God by Jesus Christ!

Above all men that live, the Christian ought to live at the most vigorous rate. We have a race to run! We must not creep and crawl, or we shall not win the prize. We have a battle to fight! If we should sheath our sword, put off our armor and go to sleep, how can we overcome our enemies? We have an agony to endure, according to His power that works in us mightily, and there cannot be this resisting unto blood—striving against sin— unless all our passions are awakened and all our powers are stirred for the wondrous inward strife. We ought to ask for quickening because of what we ought to be.

Then, we ought to ask for quickening because of what we shall be. “It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like He, for we shall see Him as He is.” Brothers and Sisters, you are to be a pure spirit in Heaven! Be spiritual now! Brothers and Sisters, you are to sing among the angels! Rehearse the music now! Brothers and Sisters, you are to see His face that is as the sun that shines in its strength! Let not your eyes be now sealed with dust! Let them be clear, as clear as they can be in this misty atmosphere of earth. Brothers and Sisters, you are to sit upon the Throne with Christ, for He says, “As I have overcome, and have sat down with My Father upon His Throne, so, also, shall you sit with Me upon My Throne.” Remember where you are to be and behave yourself accordingly! You cannot maintain the dignity of your high calling, or your heavenly destiny unless you have an abundance of spiritual life—so pray, “Quicken me, O Lord.”

Now, to come back to the Psalmist’s own confessions and reflections. He gives us another motive for seeking this in the 88th verse: “Quicken me after Your loving kindness; so shall I keep the testimony of Your mouth.” We need quickening in order to obedience. If our life decays, then the power of sin will get the mastery over us. We cannot go in the way of obedience and punctuality and scrupulous care and inward heartiness unless we are daily quickened. I am sure you want to be holy, Brothers and Sisters. I am sure you do! Well, then, pray, “Quicken me.” There is no such thing as dead holiness—it must be living holiness and you must be made alive in order to be obedient—for there is no such thing as dead obedience. Up to the altar of God they brought birds and they brought beasts, but they never brought fish! Why? Because they could not bring live fish and there must be no sacrifice presented to God but that which has life! Ask for life, that you may have obedience!

Look at the 107th verse and you have another reason for seeking quickening, because it will be your comfort. “I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O Lord, according to Your Word.” Or, better still, at the 50th verse, “This is my comfort in my affliction: for Your Word has quickened me.” Do you need comforting? Get quickening! Do not so much ask the Lord to give you sweet promises, as to give you inward life, for in life there is always light. “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” As the light is the life, the life is the light—and when you get the life of God within your soul, you will get the comfort of God. I urge you to seek quickening, then, if you are under any distress, because it will be the quickest means of your finding consolation in your trouble.

Look, also, at the 87th and the 88th verses, to which we have already referred, and you will see that we ought to seek quickening as the best security against attacks of enemies. We need not examine how we can meet the foe, or with what argument we can refute his sophistries, or with what weapons we can overthrow him. “Quicken me, O Lord,” is still the prayer, even though they threaten to consume us from off the face of the earth! We have but to keep close to the precepts of God and pray for quickening, and we shall be “more than conquerors through Him that loved us.” The use of the word, “quicken,” will be seen in the 93rd verse. “I will never forget Your Precepts: for with them you have quickened me.”

We are always in danger of forgetting God’s precepts. So, to invigorate our memories and to fortify our hearts, we must get quickening. Nothing can make a man so secure of walking rightly and defying all the attacks of his enemies as the reception of spiritual life. The young man can only cleanse his way by taking heed to it according to God’s Word. But he cannot take heed to his way if he is not alive in the way. Life is the great thing. Look at a pool of water when it stands still—how it becomes mantled over with weeds—how stagnant and defiled it is. But give it vent and let it run down yonder brook among the stones—let it leap in little cascades on its way down to the river. It is alive and see how pure it gets, refining as it goes, dropping all the filthiness it had accumulated before! It become sweeter and clearer because of life! So it must be with us. We

must have life!

We shall forget God’s precepts, also, and lose the purity of life unless quickening is abundantly given to us. If I needed some one thrilling motive to awaken the reluctant, I would resort to this—the terrible consequences of losing spiritual life. I do not mean the effect of losing it, altogether, but of lacking it in its manifest display. Alas that it should be so easy to give obvious illustrations! But I could tell you of many congregations and Churches where there is no evidence of vitality, growth or increase. It is as if they were all dead. I do not say that there is no spiritual life, but there is none in the sense in which I am using the term. They have fallen into a dead sleep and the members of the Church are cold, apathetic, spiritless.

Life among them is at the lowest ebb. You cannot be sure they breathe. By breathe I mean—a breath of prayer. Some of them have not been to a Prayer Meeting, they could not tell when. Some do not know if they ever were. And when they attend Lord’s-Day services, not a few of them literally sleep—and the rest of them sleep with their eyes open. The minister is dozing, dreaming, snoring, talking in his sleep—that is what his preaching is like. There is plenty of preaching like that—an inarticulate snoring of the everlasting Gospel! The preacher, perhaps, reads, or else he repeats what he has laboriously committed to memory and says it as a school boy does his lesson—and he is glad when it is over—for he considers that preaching twice on Sunday wears him out, dear man!

And well it may, as he does it. It wears his people out as well. They have no evangelical spirit. The surrounding neighborhood is not evangelized by them. They do not increase—they do not think of increasing. In fact, they get fewer as the good people go home to Heaven. Any attempt to do anything there would be looked upon as “an innovation.” Yet they do something—they have a disturbance every now and then. They hold what they call a, “Church meeting,” which means, in their case, a spiritual bear-garden in which they show their life. And one minister after another is driven away—not that it is a fit place for anybody to desire to go, you know, for there is very little to be had except abuse. But still, that is the style of the thing—and there are hundreds of churches in England in that condition.

O that the Lord would quicken them! May this place be reduced to ashes and may the congregation be scattered to the four winds of Heaven sooner than it should become a huge mausoleum, a catacomb of which it may be said, “the dead are there”! Ah, it is ill to have “the means of Grace” without the Grace of the means—to have a name to live and to be dead! God save us from it! Take heed to yourselves! Some of the members of this Church, I fear, are getting into that condition! Yet not, I know, you that are present this evening. You would not, most likely, have been here on such a wet night as this if you had not some care for the things of God.

I refer to those that are not here. When you get home tell them so—tell them what I have said about it—and then perhaps they will say, “Well, if the pastor always speaks severely of those who are not there we had better go, so as to escape his censures.”

III. Now let us mention briefly SOME OF THE WAYS BY WHICH THIS QUICKENING MAY BE WORKED IN US. Of course the Lord, Himself, must do it. In prayer it must be sought because by His power it must be worked. The prayer is, “Quicken me, O Lord, according to Your Word.” He does not expect the quickening from any but a Divine source. From where can life come but from the ever living God? How can we expect that we should get life if, while we seek the gratuity, we totally forget the Divine energy of Him who alone can bestow it? In the 37th verse we are told how the Lord often quickens His people, namely, by turning off their eyes from beholding vanity. “Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken me in Your way.”

The Lord sometimes takes the vanity away of which we made our idol— or else He takes us away from the idol and does not permit us to find any contentment in it. Oh, it is half the battle to be weaned from the creature! It is half the battle, I say, to get the eyes off vanity, for then you are likely to get your eyes turned upon God! May He be graciously pleased to quicken some of you in that way. In the 50th verse we find that God quickens His people by His Word. “Your Word has quickened me.” And the part of the Word which He often blesses to this end is remarkable, for, in the 93rd verse it is written, “I will never forget Your Precepts; for with them You have quickened me.”

Promises are quickening, doctrines are quickening, but David says, “Your Precepts—with them you have quickened me.” If we preach frequently and earnestly the precepts of our Lord there are hearers who will complain and say, “The minister is getting legal.” No, Brothers and Sisters, it is you that are getting dead, for when you are alive you will love God’s Laws and those precepts will quicken you. “But they pain me,” says one. That is often how people are quickened! While a person is drowning, we have heard that his sensations are often really delightful—but when he is fished out of the water, as soon as he begins to recover life, the blood begins to tingle in the veins and the pain is intense. The pain of returning life is something terrible.

Well, so it is with God’s precepts when He quickens us with them. These Laws pain us because they show us our shortcomings, expose to us our faultiness and humble us. Brothers and Sisters—that is the way to be quickened! When you are numbed, you know that is next door to being dead. But when that numbed flesh of yours begins to come to life again— you have felt it, you must have felt it—when the blood begins to circulate by rubbing, a sharp pain is excited in the part that, before, was numbed and painless. Be thankful for the pain—that is an index of life. “I love Your Precepts, for with them you have quickened me.”

May the Lord apply a text of Scripture to your soul with power, or let Him send a Word from the minister as he speaks in Jehovah’s name with a Divine force, and you will soon feel the effect. Though you appeared to be dead, you will start up and begin to live again! Have you not often found it so? Have you not often found great reviving come to your sinking spirit? Pray the Lord to make His Word always thus vivifying and inspiriting to you. In the 107th verse we have another means of quickening which God frequently uses, namely, affliction. “I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O Lord, according to Your Word.” God frequently employs adversity as a black poker to stir us up that the flame of devotion may be brighter.

When you observe the fire in your sitting room getting dull and going out, you do not always put more coals on, but you stir it—and sometimes affliction does that for us. It stirs us and makes the life which was languishing to briskly burst forth. Be thankful if God stirs your fire. Then, again, this quickening is sometimes worked in us by means of Divine comfort, as in the 50th verse—“This is my comfort, for Your Word has quickened me.” The great flush of comfort, the sudden inflow of supreme joy when you were much depressed—this has greatly cheered and invigorated you. At least I know it has often been so with me.

When very despondent and sad at heart, I have felt a soft stream, as though it were the Gulf Stream with its warm, genial temperature, flowing into my soul, melting all the icebergs that had gathered round my heart. and I have wondered what it was. How has my gratitude turned to my gracious God and found sweet expression in that hymn*—*

*“Your mercy is more than a match for my heart, Which wonders to feel its own hardness depart, Dissolved by Your goodness, I fall to the ground, And weep to the praise of the mercy I’ve found.”*

You will often have proved, I doubt not, how God uses the comfort of His Spirit to quicken His children.

IV. Our last point is to enquire WHAT ARE OUR PLEAS WHEN WE COME BEFORE GOD TO ASK FOR QUICKENING? What arguments shall we use? Well, Brothers and Sisters, use first the argument of your necessity. Whatever that necessity is, particularize it, as David does in the 107th verse—“I am afflicted very much; quicken me.” Or take our text, “My soul cleaves to the dust, quicken me.” Plead your necessities! Your needs shall be the argument for the oil and wine. Your emaciation and your hunger shall be the argument for a festival. Show the Lord what you are and where you are. Confess it before Him and this shall be good pleading.

Also plead, if it is in your power to do so, the earnest desire that God has kindled in you. Read the 40th verse— “Behold I have longed for Your Precepts; quicken me in Your righteousness.” This is as much as to say, “Lord, You have given me great longings after You. You gave me these cravings—will You not satisfy them? Do You torture me with the miseries of Tantalus? Do You grieve me with a thirst which You will not gratify? Have You given me a hunger for the Bread of Heaven only for the sake of torturing me?” Beloved, if you have a desire, you may depend upon it, the desire of the righteous shall be granted. God does not excite the appetite without providing the nourishment.

If He makes you hunger and thirst after righteousness, remember the promise, “Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.” They shall not have merely a little, a crumb or two to stay their stomachs, but they shall be filled! Go and plead that before God. “I have longed after Your Precepts; quicken me in Your righteousness.” There is the second plea. And then you may find a third in the very righteousness of God, as we have seen in the 40th verse. Appeal to His righteousness! Do I see you start back abashed? Do I hear you say, “Oh no! I could not appeal to that, for the righteousness of God must condemn me.”

Stop a minute. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” Why, the Justice of God is on the side of the man who has received God’s promise because it were unjust of God to break it! He will not alter the thing that has gone out of His mouth! The Lord has given His Word that He will give His people life. The very fact of His having made them live at all is the proof that He means to continue to make them live! Go and plead it, then. Say—“In Your righteousness, oh Lord, quicken me.” David is very often harping upon that string. As I showed you in the reading, he twice appeals to God’s judgment, or His Justice, that He would quicken him.

Another, and a very sweet plea is that of God’s loving kindness. Read the 88th verse—“Quicken me after Your loving kindness.” Look at the 149th verse—“Hear my voice according unto Your loving kindness: O Lord, quicken me according to Your judgment.” And so again in the 156th verse—“Great are Your tender mercies, O Lord: quicken me according to Your judgments.” “You pitying God, give me more life. O You who wills not the death of any, give me more life. O You that loves as a father loves, give me more life! O You who have engraved me upon the palms of Your hands, quicken me! Quicken me, I beseech You.” Are they not blessed pledges to lay hold on—His loving kindness and His tender mercies? With such promises you will be sure to prevail!

And then what a comprehensive plea is that of our text—“Quicken me according to Your Word.” You have it in the 25th verse and you have it in the hundred and seventh. He pleads the Word of God. What that Word was that David had to appeal to, it would rather puzzle me to tell you. His Bible was not so large nor near so full as ours. I do not find any promise of quickening before David’s time. Perhaps a special promise had been given to him, or, at any rate, the promise is virtually in the Pentateuch. But certainly, to us, there is abundant testimony to be found in the Word of God, for our Lord Jesus Christ Himself has told us—“Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but it shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” “I give unto My sheep eternal life.” The Son of man has come not only that we might have life, but that we might have it more abundantly!

Plead the promises, Brothers and Sisters! Plead the promises and, as you plead them before the Lord, you may rest quite certain that God will be as good as His Word and, if you can plead the promise, the promise will be surely fulfilled to you. Beloved in Christ, do tenderly watch over your spiritual life, or otherwise you are hypocrites when you pray “quicken me.” Take heed lest you neglect the food of your souls! Do not

go where your life would be in danger! Do not seek worldly company, do not indulge in worldly amusements. Keep out of all the deadening influences of the world as much as you can.

Have you ever seen the Grotto del Cane near Naples? It has a deadly gas at the bottom of it. They take a dog and throw him in and when they drag him up the dog looks as if he were dead. But by the aid of a fresh water bath he comes round again. As they thus kill the poor dog half a dozen times a day, I do not envy him his experience. Indeed, I rather think if I were that dog I would lose no time in seeking another master! Yet there are some professing Christians that will go into bad company—get into the bad gas of temptation—and then they go and hear a sermon and get back their spiritual life. I would advise you not to be like that poor dog, but to keep out of harm’s way.

If you have life, do your best to maintain it and do not run the risk of suspended animation. Knowing the worth and joy of life, yourself, pray very earnestly that God would give it to others. Look on the dead in sin, but not with stony eyes. Look on them with tears. Even if I knew that my hearers must be lost, I would pray God to help me to weep over them, because our Savior’s tears over Jerusalem, you remember, were accompanied with a distinct indication that Jerusalem would be destroyed. “Oh, that you had known, even you, in this your day, the things which make for your peace! But now are they hid from your eyes.” Still He wept.

We have no such terrible knowledge about the destiny of any man. We look hopefully upon you unconverted people and we exhort you because we expect you to believe in Jesus! We sincerely trust that you will be saved and, therefore, we pray for you in hope. May the Lord in infinite mercy lead you to feel for yourselves and pray for yourselves— “Quicken me, O Lord!” Do you feel that prayer welling up from your soul? Does it rise from your heart? Then, already there is something of spiritual life there! Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall have life, for He who said, “He that lives and believes in Me shall never die,” said also, “He that believes in Me, though He were dead, yet shall He live.”

God give you that living faith which is the token of the Divine life. To Him be glory forever and ever! Amen.  
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A MAN OF GOD ALONE WITH GOD  
NO. 2796

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 1902.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 26, 1878.

**“I have declared my ways, and You heard me: teach me Your statutes.” Psalm 119:26.**

WORLDLY men think very little of God. They live at a distance from Him. They have no communion with Him. Like the fool, they have said in their heart, “No God,” and they try to realize in their lives their heart’s desire. Very different is it with the true Believer. He recognizes God everywhere! He sees God in all the good or ill that checkers life—he believes that God has created every worm that crawls upon the face of the earth and that He has painted every flower that blooms. The whole world is full of God to him who believes in God and he has communion with God wherever he goes. He cannot live without Him—He is his joy and delight. He is a child of God—how can he live happily in his Father’s house unless he often sees his Father’s face, speaks with Him and hears His voice in return? The Christian makes much of God and God makes much of him, for they have a mutual delight in one another! Hence, in such a text as this, you perceive how the Psalmist talked with God and God heard him—and he knew that God heard him! And then he spoke again to God and said, “Teach me Your statutes.”

This is, perhaps, one of the main differences between the Believer and the unbeliever—between him that fears God and him that fears Him not. The first lesson for man is to know his God. The second is to know himself and, as the unbeliever fails in the first, he fails in the second, also. He does not know himself. He does not think much about himself—about his real self, the most important part of his being. For his body, he caters freely—he can scarcely spend enough upon it. But he starves his soul— he scarcely recognizes its existence and he has but little thought or care about the immortality to which it is ordained! But a true Believer knows himself. We are sure, from our text, that he does, for he would not declare his ways if he did not know them. He has practiced introspection and looked within himself. He has practiced self-examination and studied his own inner life. He does not profess to understand himself altogether—for man is the next greatest mystery to God. God is the first mystery and man is the second. He does not understand his own ways. He cannot always comprehend his own thoughts, or follow the devious wanderings of his own mind, but he does know a good deal about himself, and when he goes before his God, he can truthfully say, “I have declared my ways, and You heard me.” Among other things, he has discovered his own ignorance and, therefore, he presents the prayer with which the text concludes, “Teach me.” He is even ignorant of God’s revealed will, so he prays, “‘Teach me Your statutes, O Lord! I know the Book in which they are recorded and I can learn them in the letter, but You teach them to me, in my spirit, by Your Spirit, that I may know them aright.”

This, then, is to be the subject of our meditation. Let us come to it looking up to the Lord and asking Him to bless the meditation to each one of us. I shall take the text in two senses. The primary one is, I think, a man of God alone with God—“I have declared my ways,” (“to God”), “and You heard me: teach me Your statutes.” But I judge that it is lawful, especially in the light of the following verse, to believe that the Psalmist may have alluded to his speaking with men, so, in the second part of my discourse, I shall speak of a man of God considering his own public testimony and saying, when he had done so, “I have declared my ways, and You heard me: teach me Your statutes. Make me to understand the way of Your precepts: so shall I talk”—which must mean his speaking to others—“so shall I talk of Your wondrous works.”

I. So, first, we see here A MAN OF GOD ALONE WITH GOD. And we notice three things about him. He is making his case known—“I have declared my ways.” He is rejoicing in an audience which he has obtained— “You heard me.” And he is seeking a further blessing—“Teach me Your statutes.”

First, he is making his case known. I understand this to be, first, the language of a sinner confessing his sin—“I have declared my ways. He is a sensible sinner and, therefore, he is not in a confessional box with the human ear of a fellow sinner to listen to him. He is a rational being who has not degraded himself so low as that. But he is confessing his sin to the great High Priest who can be “touched with the feeling of our infirmities”—to Him who cannot be defiled by listening to our tale of sin. To Him to whom, alone, will it avail to confess our sins, for, “He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins,” if we confess them to Him.

Can each one of us now say, in this sense, “I have declared my ways” to the Lord? For this should be done, not only at our first coming to Him, but continually throughout the whole of our life. We should look over each day and sum up the errors of the day, and say, “‘I have declared my ways’—my evil ways, my wicked ways, my wandering ways, my backsliding ways, my cold, indifferent ways, my proud ways. I have declared the way of my words, the way of my thoughts, the way of my imagination, the way of my memory, for it has a treacherous way of remembering evil and forgetting good. I have declared the way of my actions towards You, my God, and there is much to regret. I have declared the way of my actions in my family, in the world and in the church.” What a sorrowful stocktaking each day would be to many professors if they were honest to themselves and to their God! Even those who “walk in the light, as God is in the light,” and have the closest fellowship with Him, yet know that it is a very sweet and blessed thing even for them that “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin,” for even they still sin and it is necessary for each one of them to say continually, “I have declared my ways.”

Do you try to hide your sins, dear Friend? It is useless for you to attempt to do so, for God always sees them. Why do you seek to conceal what is always before His eyes? Better far to confess them to Him, that He may then cast it behind His back and remember them against you no more forever! I believe that often, as sinners confessing to God, we miss much true comfort for lack of making a clean breast of our transgressions. Yet the Lord knows what is in our heart even though we do not acknowledge it. It has been well observed that when Moses tried to excuse himself to God for not wanting to go to deliver Israel, he said that he was slow of speech. And God met that objection by giving him Aaron, his brother, to speak for him—but the Lord, in His reply to Moses, also said, “All the men are dead who sought your life.” Moses had not said anything about that matter, but God knew that there was that fear in his heart, so He at once put His finger on the sore place. It is well when we can do that for ourselves. When, in our spirit, there is no guile—when we come, as David did in the 51st Psalm and confess the very sin which we have committed. David said, “Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God,” calling it by its right name—then is it that the soul begins to get peace with God.

“But,” someone asks, “are we, then, to confess to God every sin in detail?” No, that would be impossible and probably it would not even be useful. But there must be no wish to conceal any sin from God. Such a desire would be a vain one, for, “all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.” There must be an acknowledgment of the sins which we have not yet seen in their full heinousness. Each of us will do well to offer David’s prayer, “Cleanse You me from secret faults.” If we have committed faults which are hidden even from ourselves, we desire to be delivered from them so that they should not remain to our condemnation.

I do not suppose that any unregenerate sinner will act thus towards his God until the Holy Spirit has begun to work graciously within him. While the prodigal was wasting his substance with riotous living, he thought himself a fine gentleman! And even when he was feeding the swine, he only said, “I have had very bad luck.” But it was “when he came to himself” that he said, “I will arise and go to my father.” And it was when he felt his father’s warm kiss upon his cheek that he made the confession, “Father, I have sinned.” There is no contrition so deep as that of the man who can say concerning his sins—

*“I know they are forgiven—  
But, still, their pain to me  
Is all the grief and anguish  
They laid, my Lord, on Thee.”*

So, then, our text is, first, the language of a sinner confessing his guilt to his God, but it is more than that. It is, next, the private talks of a patient with his doctor—“I have declared my ways.”

See, there is the little room upstairs and there lies the patient whom the physician has come to try to cure. The doctor’s first work is to find out all he can about the patient’s disease, so he begins by asking concerning the various symptoms that have been noticed. He is sure to look at the sick man’s tongue and you may learn a great deal, spiritually, of the condition of a man’s heart from the state of his tongue. The doctor will also sound the patient’s lungs, test his heart, take his temperature and ask him a great many questions, not merely about what appears on the surface, but about his inmost self. And when, at last, the patient can say, “There, doctor, I have told you all, now will you prescribe for me?” he is in the condition of the Psalmist when he said to the Lord, “I have declared my ways, and You heard me: teach me Your statutes.”

The text very accurately describes such a state of things as that which exists when a patient relates his symptoms to the physician and then the physician prescribes for him, for, in addition to sin being a great evil in the sight of God, it is also a disease to which we are all prone and from which only the great Physician can cure us. We cry out against it and our better self fights against it, yet the old man within us, “the body of this death,” as Paul calls it, fights against the new nature and we would be overcome were it not for Divine Grace. So it is well for us to declare our ways. Suppose I put it for myself or for you thus, “Lord, I find that even when I am engaged in prayer, my thoughts wander. When I am in trouble, I get fretful and rebellious. When a little difficulty meets me in my business, I do not trust You as I ought. I sometimes find that when I try to be humble, I become desponding, and when I am joyful, I become presumptuous. I seem to be like a pendulum swinging too far this way and then too far that way. I know not how to steer the ship of my life between the Scylla of this sin and the Charybdis of that. O my Master, I am but dust and ashes! I am less than nothing and vanity! If You ask me what ails me, I seem to have all manner of diseases upon me at once! Sometimes I am hot with fever and full of wrath and, at other times, I shiver with chills as though I did not know what I believed and could not lay hold of Your Truth with a firm grip. Sometimes I fear that I have a fatal disease and, certainly, were it not for Your unfailing medicine—the great catholicon—my soul would pine away and die! Yet, with all these evil symptoms, there is one sign that, I trust, is for good. I know where my help lies and I look alone to You for healing. I know that Your precious blood has cleansed me and on that blood, alone, I do rely.” Thus the patient tells the Good Physician, as far as he can, what he feels and what is the disease from which he is suffering.

I think, too, that we might use another figure to illustrate the meaning of our text. It is like a client telling his advocate all about his affairs. It is a difficult case in law. There is an accuser who has come forward with very serious charges and he brings witnesses to substantiate what he affirms—the case is a very complicated one. The client says that he does not know how to plead for himself. He says that he is at his wits’ end and he asks the advocate whether he has any argument that can avail for him. The advocate replies, “I must first know all about your case before I can advise you, so tell me everything.” Now, the Lord Jesus, your great Advocate, already knows all about you yet He likes you to tell it all to Him. It is always a good thing to—

*“Tell it all to Jesus,*

*Comfort or complaint.”*  
Mind that you tell it all to Him—do not keep anything back. Tell Him the complex part of your life and tell Him the black part of it—be sure to bring that out. Tell Him that the accuser has good ground for his charges against you and that he can bring abundant witnesses against you—yes, that your own conscience will witness against you and that you do not know of any plea, on earth or in Heaven, that can avail for you unless He will be your Advocate. Then, how dear that Advocate will be to you when He tells you that He can plead His righteousness, His life, His blood and His death, for “if any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.”

I do not think, however, that we have reached the very marrow of our text until we regard it as describing the intimate communion of friend with friend—“I have declared my ways.” When two men become linked together in close friendship, they are in the habit of telling one another all that happens in their lives. And if one of them is in a difficulty, he goes off to his friend and tells him about it. They agree with Solomon that “two are better than one; for if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow” and, by mutual counsel, wisdom will be found. The one who is in trouble tells his friend about it and his friend, perhaps, puts to him a number of questions, not out of prying curiosity, but in order that he may become acquainted with the whole case and so be qualified to advise or to help. And we, Beloved, if we really know the Lord in spirit and in truth, are exalted to the position of friends of Jesus. “Henceforth,” said He to His disciples, “I call you not servants, for the servant knows not what his lord does: but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you.” “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His Covenant.”

The Lord said, “Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?” when he was about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. And we must hide nothing from our God. It ought to be the daily habit of the Believer to commune with his God—we ought to make Him our Confidant in all things. You will go amiss, depend upon it, if you do not wait upon the Lord for guidance. “Bring here the ephod,” was David’s command to the priests when he was in perplexity and knew not what he ought to do. Israel made a great mistake with regard to the Gibeonites because the case seemed so simple to them that they felt they did not need to consult the Lord concerning it. Here were men with dry and moldy bread and with old shoes and socks upon their feet. They said they had come from a far country and the matter appeared so plain that the Israelites asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord, but took of their provisions and made a treaty with them, as they would not have done if they had consulted the Lord. I do not think that God’s people often go astray in the most difficult cases, for they do take

 them to the Lord in prayer. It is in simple matters that we make our greatest blunders, because we think we know what to do and, therefore, we do not wait upon the Lord for guidance. Yet he who leans to his own understanding is trusting to a broken reed which will be sure to fail him just when he most needs it. So let us, each one, say to the Lord, in the language of the text, “I have declared my ways.”

Thus far, we have been thinking of the Believer making his case known. Now, secondly, we are to see him rejoicing that he has obtained an audience with God—“You heard me.” I cannot tell you how my heart is touched with the sweetness of that short sentence. Did You hear me, O Lord? What condescension on Your part! You have the whole universe to rule and govern—the sweetest songsters are in Your choirs sounding forth Your praises day without night, yet You heard me? And I was not singing Your praises, but confessing my sins! I was not telling the story of all Your wondrous works—I was telling of my own wicked works and of my sorrows and cares—and You might well have said, “These things are too small, too insignificant to be brought before My notice.” Yet You did not speak so, for You heard me.

But there is something even more wonderful than His condescension, I think, and that is His patience. It is an amazing thing that He should listen to us and then, when the sad story is told, that He should not turn away in the greatness of His wrath and utterly destroy us. I think that if you were to tell out all that is in your own heart to any one of your most intimate friends, he would never speak to you again. We read many very charming biographies of men and women, but if the whole of their lives could be written—which we may be thankful cannot be done—the book would not be fit to be read! But the Lord listens to us in some things that we have to confess to Him, that we would not confess, and could not confess and ought not to confess in any human ear, yet He does not turn away from us in disgust. His pure and holy eyes cannot look upon iniquity except with the utmost abhorrence. He loathes sin in such a way as we can hardly imagine, yet, when a penitent sinner comes to confess to Him, He patiently listens to the whole sorrowful story and feels nothing but pity and love for the guilty narrator of it. This is truly wonderful and is very different from the manner of men. A man would probably say, “You have told me, now, Sir, what I wish I had never heard, for I can never trust you again. I did not think you were so mean. I could not have believed it of you. You have told me something that has let me know that I have been cherishing a viper in my bosom! Never come to my house again—you are a person with whom I do not wish to be in any way associated.” That is how man talks. But when we have told the Lord everything, He does not spurn us from Him, but He says, “Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” He puts away our sins by blotting them out like a cloud and our transgressions as a thick cloud, blessed be His holy name!

When the Psalmist says, “You heard me,” he means, “You heard me with sympathy.” There are several different ways of hearing a story. When I have to deal with a case of very deep grief—I do not know whether you have all learned this lesson, but I will tell you how I act and you may be wise if you do the same, especially if you are a young pastor. If you get a case of very deep grief, hold your tongue and let the sorrowful one talk and tell out all the painful details. Those various items may not be very interesting to you, but if you cease to listen to any of them, you will be stopping the process of cure for that poor bleeding heart. Let the sufferer tell it all out and do not grudge the time it takes. Interject a word or two of sympathy now and then, and be really sympathetic all the while, but let the troubled soul tell it all out, just as here the Psalmist says to the Lord, “I have declared my ways, and You heard me.” If you do so, the tried one will go away and say, “I was so comforted by my interview with the pastor, or with that friend. It did me so much good.” Yet you are conscious that you did nothing but listen to the story of sorrow— and that is the best thing you could possibly have done. “Mother,” said a little girl, “I can’t think why our neighbor is so glad for me to go in and see her. She has lost her little baby and she sits and cries—and she says I am such a comfort to her! But, Mother, I never say anything! I only just put my arms round her neck and I cry, too.” Ah, but that is the best way to comfort the sorrowing! And that is what Jesus does for you when you get near to Him. He is touched with the feeling of our infirmity and it is His being touched that enables us to bear the blow which has so grievously wounded our heart.

“You heard me.” Even if the Lord did not seem to answer us, yet there would be much comfort to us from His hearing us, letting us tell all our grief to Him in the full belief that we are not merely telling it out to the air, or speaking to emptiness, but that into His ear and into His heart the story of our grief is falling. There is no comfort like this. Try it, mourning ones, you who love His blessed name!

But I think that the Psalmist meant even more than this when he said to God, “You heard me.” Surely he meant, “You did graciously come to my help, ‘I declared my ways’—the sinfulness of them—‘and You heard me’ and did blot out my transgressions. ‘I declared my ways’—the disease of sin that was in my soul—and by Your stripes You did heal me. By Your Spirit You did sanctify me. ‘I declared my ways’—my legal difficulties, my accusers’ words—and You did hear me by answering them and sending such joy and peace into my soul that I dared even to cry, ‘Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes rather, that is risen again.’ I told You all my ways and, like a true and faithful friend, You did not spare anything that You might help me. As You did give Your Son to redeem me and Your Spirit to sanctify me, so did You give Your Providence to succor me and Your Presence to comfort me. ‘You heard me.’ I did not cry to You in vain.” Are not these words wondrously rich, dear Brothers and Sisters? I seem, in talking to you, as if I only skimmed the surface—as a swallow touches the brook with his wing and is up and away again in a moment—but you may dive into their depths in your happy, heartfelt experience!

Now I come, in the third place, to this man of God alone with God seeking a further blessing—“Teach me Your statutes.” I think the Psalmist means this, “My Lord, I have told You all. Now, will You tell me all? I have declared to You my ways. Now, will You teach me Your ways? I have confessed to You how I have broken Your statutes—will You not give me Your statutes back again? I have acknowledged my weakness. Now, will You not strengthen me, that I may run in the way of Your commandments?”

We will take this request, “Teach me Your statutes,” in the same way as we took our first division. “I, a sinner, have confessed to You, O Lord, my wicked ways. Will You not teach me Your statutes, that I may sin against You no more? Teach me how to be holy. Teach me to repent, for repentance is one of Your statutes. Teach me to believe, for faith in Your dear Son is one of Your great Gospel statutes. Teach me to pray, for this shall help to keep me pure, and prayer is a statute of Yours. Teach me to watch against temptation. Teach me to search the Scriptures. Teach me to yield myself up to You as a living sacrifice, which is my reasonable service. So teach me that I shall—

*“No more from You depart  
No more Your Spirit grieve.”*

Then, next, our text means, “I am a patient, and You, O Lord, are my Physician. I have told You the symptoms of my case. Now will You teach me Your statutes that I may be healed? I know that Your Word has a healing power, for it is written, ‘He sent His Word and healed them.’ Now, Lord, heal the bleeding wounds of my conscience by Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word! Heal my darkened understanding by your Spirit’s illumination of it through Your Word. You see what my disease is—Your Word is the great Pharmacopoeia which contains remedies for all spiritual maladies—and You know which will best suit my case. Prescribe for me! ‘Teach me Your statutes.’”

Then, in the case of a client consulting his advocate, the text means, “I have declared my ways to You, my great Advocate. Now ‘teach me Your statutes,’ I pray You that I may be wise to meet my future accusers. ‘Teach me Your way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path because of my enemies.’ ‘Teach me Your statutes’ that I may not give occasion to the enemy to accuse me. Make me wise since I have to deal with the craft of the devil and the malice of the world. Teach me when to be silent and when to speak. Give me my Master’s wisdom, who baffled all His adversaries though they constantly sought to catch Him in His speech. Teach me how to live so blameless and guileless a life that I may be both wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove. I have told You the difficulty of my ways and how my adversaries seek to entrap me—‘teach me Your statutes, that I may escape like a bird from the snare of the fowler.’”

Then, as a friend speaking to his friend, this passage means, “‘I have declared my ways,’ now ‘teach me Your statutes,’ O Lord, that I may never lose Your friendship! O my great Friend, I have told You how remiss and how unthankful and unkind I have been to You, but do not be angry with me! Undertake to mend me, I pray You. Make Your poor friend better. Some of my sin springs from ignorance, so ‘teach me Your statutes.’ Much of it springs from my corrupt heart, so, O Lord, sanctify it by the power of Your cleansing Word! O Jesus, I cannot bear the thought of losing Your friendship! You have taught me the sweetness of it, so do not take it away from me, for if now I were to lose You, I would be, of all men, most miserable! The unregenerate sinner knows not the sweetness of Your love, but, like the swine, he is content with his husks. But I have eaten Heaven’s bread and if I am to lose it now, woe is me, for I shall be doubly undone!”

A poor man who has always been poor knows not the smart of poverty like the emperor or the prince who comes down to be a beggar. It must have been a sad sight to see Belisarius, the valiant general, brought down so low as to beg in the streets of Rome and, oh, if a Believer could lose the friendship of his Lord, he would be doubly damned! There would be two Hells for him who had peeped into Heaven and tasted angels’ food—and then had lost it and been cast away forever! Blessed be the name of the Lord—that shall never be the case with any true Believer! And that it may not be the case with you, pray this prayer, “O Lord, ‘teach me Your statutes.’ I am a poor ignorant fool, but. O my blessed Friend to whom I have confessed my ignorance, teach me! I shall be but a dull scholar, yet do not put me out of Your class. It will show what a wonderful Teacher You are if You will teach me! It will make even the angels marvel if You will make a good scholar out of such a dullard as I am! Here I am, Lord, ‘teach me Your statutes.’”

II. Now for a few minutes let us turn to the second way of considering our text which is, THE MAN OF GOD STATING HIS TESTIMONY IN PUBLIC.

First, then, according to this way of understanding the text, we have here a man of God who has borne his testimony. He has spoken to man experimentally. He has not spoken about something he has read of, but he says, “‘I have declared my ways’—the ways which I myself have trodden. I have told them of my evil ways and warned them against the evils that lurk in the paths of sin. I have told them of the wounds I received in the house of sin, and I have warned others against going there. I have also told them of the ways of penitence, for You have graciously led me in them. I have told them of that bitter sweet or sweet bitter, the pleasing pain of weeping over sin. I have told them of the ways of faith—how I was led by the Law, as schoolmaster, to Christ—how I was shut up from every other confidence and then came and trusted in the Lord. ‘I have declared my ways’ and I have also told my fellow sinners what the Lord has done for me and in what ways I have been led since I have believed in Jesus. I have told them of the ways of answered prayer which I have trodden, of the ways of gracious help which have been vouchsafed to me. I have told them of my Ebenezers, of the ways of God’s Providence and related how I have been succored, again and again, in the hour of my distress. ‘I have declared my ways’ and said of them all, ‘Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life.’”

We are bound, dear Friends, not only to preach Christ’s Gospel, but to also preach our experience of it. You remember that remarkable expression of our Lord in one of His last prayers to the Father, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them, also, which shall believe on Me through”— what? “through their word.” Then, is it their word? No, it is the Lord’s, yet it is also theirs, for they have made it theirs by personal appropriation and experience of it! The Truth of God never seems to have such vividness about it as when a man tells it out of his own soul. You read it in this blessed Book and you know it is true, for God has revealed it, but when you hear a godly man say, “I have tasted and handled this and have proved its truth,” then, somehow, there is a still greater force in it which brings the Truth of God home to you. That is what this servant of God could say, “I have declared my ways.”

And he had not declared them with any view to vain-glory, but only that he might glorify God. Neither had he spoken of himself except with the object of persuading others to walk in the ways of the Lord in which he had, himself, been so graciously led. We must always be cautious as to how we speak of ourselves—we shall do well if we can say with the Apostle Paul, “We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.” If we ever do speak about ourselves, it must be only as a foil or setting to that priceless jewel of the loving kindness of the Lord. “I have declared my ways.”

The next sentence, “You heard me,” teaches us that God had heard this man. What solemn work it is to preach if we have God for a hearer! You know how Richard Baxter felt about this matter—

*“I preached as never sure to preach again, And as a dying man to dying men.”*

We should so preach as though we knew that every word was being written down by the recording angel and that God Himself was listening to all that we said. This would make it a very solemn thing to open our mouth for the Lord and to bear testimony for Him, yet what a cheering thing it is that the Lord hears our testimony and can confirm its truthfulness! For, as surely as any of you ever speak for the Lord, you will be misunderstood—and that is not the worst of it—you will also be willfully misrepresented by some of your hearers. The very things you say, they will declare that you ought to have said—and the things that you did not say, they will pretend that you did say. They will turn your words upside down and inside out! I am judging by my own experience, for I have long proved that it is utterly impossible for me to utter a single sentence which someone or other cannot twist into mischief. This is a grievous evil under the sun—that he that speaks is not judged according to his own words, but according to whatever men choose to put into those words and to make them mean—so that the thing that was farthest from our thoughts and which our soul abhorred, has often been set down to us when we neither said nor thought anything of the kind! Now, if any of you are called to pass through that trouble—and I daresay you will if you try earnestly to serve your Master—fall back upon this declaration, “‘I have declared my ways,’ honestly, simply, plainly, with a pure desire to glorify God and bless my fellow men ‘and You heard me.’ I appeal to You, O Lord, for You know what was spoken! You are the Supreme Judge and to You I bring my case.”

When, with weeping eyes and with broken words, my dear Sister, you talk to some poor soul about the Savior, let it be a comfort to you that the Lord hearkens and hears, and that a Book of Remembrance is kept before Him in which are recorded all such holy acts as you are doing for Him. My dear Brother, perhaps you have not any special gift or talent, but yet you try to talk about Jesus whenever you can and somebody has heard what you said. It was very ungrammatical, and some people made a joke of it—and that grieves you very much, for you know that you were speaking in the sincerity of your heart. Now, do not say one word the less because they jest about you—rather say more because you have the double advantage of affording some people a little amusement and, at the same time, of doing good to others! Do not fret, or trouble, but just go straight on with your work for the Lord! And if you really did make a mistake and used the wrong word, you can say, “Ah, but the Lord knew what I meant! You did know, O Lord, with what simplicity of soul and earnestness of heart I spoke that word and if it was not the right word, and if some even see occasion for mirth in it, yet You heard me.”

The last word of all is this—and it fits in well with this view of the text—this man needed more teaching, so he prayed, “Lord, ‘teach me Your statutes.’ Now that I have become a teacher of others, You teach me.” No man can teach if he is unwilling to be taught. Any gentleman who has “finished his education” will never be an educator of others. We must be continually making progress if we would lead others onward. I am sure that every Brother here who is engaged in the Lord’s work will find that he needs to get fresh food for his mind every day. He must eat a double portion because he has to feed others as well as to be fed. He has not only to fill his basket with bread for the eater, but also with seed for the sower, so he needs a double—no, a sevenfold portion—that he may have enough for others as well as for himself.

“Teach me Your statutes,” is a good prayer to be presented by you dear young friends who have lately come into the Church. I am always delighted to hear of your trying to do good. I am glad for you to get into the Sunday school, or into the Evangelists’ Society, that you may try to speak for Jesus. But do remember that you need much teaching if you are to teach others. This remark applies especially to some of you. I would not keep you back, even for a minute, from trying to teach others what you already know, but I beg you to try to learn a little more. The other night a dear Brother told some of you a good story of the Negro who heard his pastor say that they all ought to teach something to somebody. Poor old Sambo called out from the gallery that he could teach something. The minister said, “I do not mean you, Sambo, for you only know your A B C.” “Ah,” said Sambo, “but there are some brethren and little children that don’t know their A B C, so Sambo can teach them that.”

Well, there is something in that view of the case—if you only know the elements of the Gospel, teach them to those who do not know them. At the same time, dear Brother, if you can learn more, you can then teach more—so do not give up the good habit, on Sabbath days, of going to hear at least one sermon. I would like to turn a lot of the people out half a day on Sundays—I mean you experienced Christian people—that you might go out and teach others, but I would like to bring in some of the young people who are always out at work and do not come in to feed as they ought. They must feed, as well as work! They must get taught, or else their teaching will soon become very vapid and powerless. In all honesty and sincerity, let each one pray, “Lord, teach me more, so that when You hear me next time, there may be more of that which You have taught me and that, when men hear it, they may be more impressed by it, because they learn more from it.” May we all first go to Him and learn of Him—then talk to Him and learn more of Him—and then go to others and talk with them about Him!

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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THE STUDENT’S PRAYER  
NO. 1344

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

**“Make me to understand the way of Your precepts: so shall I talk of Your wondrous works.”  
Psalm 119:27.**

WHEN we seek any good thing from God, we ought, also, to consider how we may use it for His Glory. It is right that desires for good things should flow from good motives. When the heart is not only gracious but grateful, it will turn to God with doable purpose, desiring the mercy and desiring to use it to His praise. The Grace of God, which brings salvation, marvelously whets the appetite for good things—it does more, it provokes an intense anxiety to glorify God’s name in the world—even before it has imparted the ability to do any good thing. Vehement passion and abject helplessness meeting together and struggling in the breast, often lead to despondency, but they ought far rather to stimulate prayer.

As soon as we are saved by Grace we are eager after supplies for our soul’s needs. “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that you may grow thereby.” This is the first stage of spiritual childhood, like the infant who cries for the bottle and takes its little fill and feasts, all to itself and all for itself. There follows on this another yearning, a desire for fellowship with the saints, although we feel too weak and too foolish to enter into such good company as we take the older disciples to be, or even to talk to them. But I will tell you what we can do. We may all venture to ask the Lord to instruct us and make us understand His ways, so that our conversation may be welcome to His people—and so He will! “Therefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as, also, you do.” This is the second stage of development.

Then comes a third grade and come, it surely will, if you follow on to know the Lord. “Then will I teach transgressors Your ways; and sinners shall be converted unto You.” Speak, my Brothers and Sisters, on this wise—“You have told me, O my God, to earnestly covet the best gifts. I do covet them, Lord, You know, not to consume them upon my lusts, but to use them for Your service. I will gladly accept Your talents as a trust, not to trifle with them, not to vaunt them as the toys of my vanity, but, by Your Grace, as a wise and faithful steward to bring You all the profit and all the interest, for I am greedy to get gain out of all those endowments You entrust to my care.” “Make me to understand the way of Your precepts: so shall I talk of Your wondrous works.”

I would have you further observe, on the threshold of our meditation, that there is not really any grave duty a man can be called on to discharge, no responsible office he may be elected to fill, nor even any plan or purpose he lays on his heart to accomplish which does not require diligent preparation on his own part to fit himself, to train his faculties and to discipline his mind. What you call unskilled labor may possibly be utilized by efficient officers, but unskillful labor is a sheer waste of power. How

much more imperative the demand that we should be endowed with the requisite faculties and qualified by suitable instruction if we have any work to do for God, or any office, however humble, in the service of the great King!

Zeal without knowledge would only betray us into reckless presumption. When called to talk of God’s wondrous works, we ought not to rush upon that exercise unfitted and unprepared, but we should wait upon the Lord, that the eyes of our understanding may be enlightened, that our stammering tongues may be unloosed and that our lips may be attuned to tell the noble tale in grateful strains. We must first obtain for ourselves an understanding of the way of the Lord’s precepts before we can make it plain to others. He who tries to teach, but has never been taught himself, will make a sorry mess of it. He who has no understanding and yet wants to make others understand, must assuredly fail! Some there are who cannot teach and will not learn—and it is because they will not learn that they cannot teach.

I believe aptness for being taught is at the bottom of aptness to teach. The Psalmist had both. He says, “Make me to understand the way of Your statutes.” There he would be taught. “Then,” he says, “I shall talk of Your wondrous works.” There he would be teaching. In pondering the text, it has appeared to me to set forth three things. First, the prayer of a student. Secondly, the occupation of a scholar. And thirdly, the intimate relation there is between them.

I. I see in it A STUDENT’S PRAYER. I hope, my beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, that we are all students in the school of Christ—all disciples or scholars—and I trust we shall adopt the student’s prayer as our own—“Make me to understand the way of Your precepts.” You know that prayer is to study what fire is to the sacrifice. I beseech you, therefore, join heartily in the petition of the text.

The student’s prayer deals with the main subject of the conversation which is to be that student’s occupation, namely, the way of God’s precepts. You and I, Brothers, have to teach those things which relate to the counsels and commandments of the Lord. It is not our province to guide men in politics or to tutor them in science. Those things are better taught by men of mark, whose time and attention are absorbed in those profound and laborious researches. As for us who are Christians and servants of Christ, our business is to teach men the things of God. To that one topic we do well to keep, both for our own good and for the good of others. If we have many studies to engage us, our thoughts will soon be scattered—and if we multiply our pursuits, we shall be incapable of concentrating all our energies upon the grand topic which Divine Wisdom has selected for us— “the way of Your precepts.”

In the way of God’s legal precepts we have great need of sound understanding, that we may be competent to instruct others. It is well to be initiated in the Law, to discern its wonderful comprehensiveness, spirituality and severity. We need to know the way of the Law—a way too hard to be trod by any mortal man so as to win salvation. It is well to survey the way of the Lord’s precepts to see how exceedingly broad and yet, at the same time, how remarkably narrow they are. “Your commandment is exceedingly broad,” and yet, “strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leads unto life and few there are that go in there.”

It is well for us to know exactly what the Law teaches and what the Law designs—why we were made subject to its prescript, and how we may be delivered from its penalties. Great need, too, have we to understand the way of God’s Gospel precepts—what these precepts are—“repent,” “believe,” “be converted” and the like. We need to be able to see their relation, where they stand, not as means to an end, but as results of Divine Grace—commands but yet promises—the duty of man but yet the gift of God! Happy is that preacher and teacher who understands the way of the Gospel precepts and never lets them clash with the precepts of the Law, so as to teach a mingle-mangle, half Law and half Gospel. Happy is he who knows the way of God’s legal precepts and sees them all ablaze with Divine wrath on account of sin—and discerns the way of the Gospel precepts—can see them all bright and yet all crimson with the precious blood of Him that opened up for us the way of acceptance!

The way of God’s precepts! Does not that mean that we ought to be acquainted with the relative position which the precepts occupy? For it is very easy, Brothers, unless God gives us understanding, to preach up one precept to the neglect of another! It is possible for a ministry and a teaching to be lopsided and those who follow it may become rather the caricatures of Christianity than Christians harmoniously proportioned. O Lord, what foolish creatures we are! When You exhort us one way, we run to such an extreme that we forget that You have given us any other counsel than that which is just now ringing in our ears!

We have known some commanded to be humble who have bowed down till they have become timorous and desponding. We have known others exhorted to be confident who have gone far beyond a modest courage and grown so presumptuous that they have presently fallen into gross transgressions. Is fidelity to the truth your cardinal virtue? Take heed of being uncharitable! Is love to God and man your highest aspiration? Beware lest you become the dupe of false apostles and foul hypocrites! Have you clad yourself with zeal as with a garment? Take care, now, lest by one act of indiscretion your garment should be rolled in blood.

Oh, how easy it is to exaggerate a virtue until it becomes a vice! A man may look to himself, examine himself and scrutinize all his actions and motives till he becomes deplorably selfish! Or, on the other hand, a man may look to others, counseling them and cautioning them, preaching to them and praying for them till he grows oblivious of his own estate, degenerates into hypocrisy and discovers, to his surprise, that his own heart is not right with God. There is a “way” about the precepts—there is a chime about them in which every bell gives out its note and makes up a tune. There is a mixture, as of old, of the anointing oil—so much of this and that and the other and, if any ingredient were left out, the oil would lose its perfect aroma. So is there an anointing of the holy life in which there is precept upon precept skillfully mingled, delicately infused, gratefully blended and Grace given to keep each of these precepts and so the life becomes sweet like an ointment most precious unto the Lord. God grant us each, if we are to teach others—and I hope we shall

 all try to do

that—to understand the way of His precepts!

As a prayer, too, this must certainly mean, “Make me understand the way to keep Your precepts.” It is not in human strength, for he that keeps the precepts of God must be kept by the God of the precepts. To keep the precepts we must keep Him in the heart who gave the precepts and whose life is the best exemplification of them. O Lord, teach us the way to observe and to do Your commands! Give us humble, dependent hearts receptive of the sweet influences of Your Spirit, that we may understand the way in which those precepts are to be kept. Does it not signify— “Lord, make me to understand the Christian life, for that is the way of Your precepts”?

Dear Friends, if you are teachers of others, you must be experimentally acquainted with the Christian life! You must know the great doctrines which support it and furnish motives for it—the great doctrines which are the pavement of the road along which the Christian travels. You must know the practical precepts, themselves—what they are and how the Lord has worded them for each circumstance and each age of the Christian life. You must know the doctrinal and the practical—and you must know the experimental—he is no preacher of any value who cannot tell the way of God’s precepts by having experienced that way! He must have felt the joy of running in it—having taken the precepts and been guided by them so as to have proved that “in keeping of them there is great reward.”

Yes, and he will be none the worse teacher if he has a lively memory of the bitterness that comes of having wandered from those commandments, for he can tell the sinner, with the tears starting in his own eyes, that he who wanders from the way of obedience will miss the paths of peace, for the way of God’s commandments is exceedingly pleasant, but they that break the hedge and follow their own will shall find that their willfulness entails upon them grievous sorrow and sore pain. This is what we need to understand the way of God’s precepts. Let the prayer go up to Heaven, especially from every young Brother who is hoping to preach the Word before long, “Make me to understand the way of Your precepts.”

Very obviously a confession is here implied. “Make me to understand the way of Your precepts.” It means just this. “Lord, I do not understand it. I am ignorant and foolish and if I follow my own judgment—if I take to my own thinking, I shall be sure to go wrong. Lord, make me to understand.” It is a confession of a good man who may understand a great deal, but feels that he does not understand all. In this learning, he who understands most is the man who thinks he understands least. He who has the clearest knowledge of Divine things is the very one to feel that there is a boundless ocean far beyond his observation and he cries “Make me to understand the way of Your precepts.” It is a confession which should be made because it is intensely felt—the consciousness of folly and ignorance forcing the confession to the lips.

Our student’s prayer asks a great gift when he says, “Make me to understand.” This is something more than, “Make me to know.” He had said just before—“Teach me Your statutes.” Every Christian needs this teaching for his own sake, but he that is to be an instructor of others must especially enquire for a thorough understanding. You Sunday school teachers who take the oversight of the children. You elders of the Church who look after enquirers and help them to the Savior—you both must not be satisfied with knowing—you must understand. A superficial acquaintance with the Scriptures will not suffice for your important office. Your mind must penetrate into the deeper meaning, the hidden treasures of wisdom. “Make me to understand.”

A catechism may supply right answers, but we need the living Teacher to give us true perceptions. Intelligence is not a faculty of babies—in understanding you must be men! Young pupils soon lose confidence in their teacher if he does not seem up to the mark. I heard two schoolboys talking of their teacher the other day. Says one, “I don’t think he knows much more than we do.” “Well, he always has to look at the book before he can tell us anything, doesn’t he?” said the other little chap. Just now, as I came along, I watched two babies trying to carry another baby a little smaller than themselves and they all three rolled down together! It is pretty to see little children anxious to help their little brother, but when the father comes up, he lifts all three and carries them with ease.

We have not many fathers, but every Christian man should aspire to that honorable and valuable estate in the Church. The wisdom that comes of experience leads up to it. “Make me to understand.” Oh Lord, the children are pleased with the flowers, help me to spy out the roots! Take me into the secrets, let me know the deep things of God! Help me to discriminate! Enable me to judge and weigh and ponder—and so to understand! Such reasons as You give, enable me to comprehend. Where You give no reason, teach my reason to feel that there must be the best of reasons for no reasons having been given! So make me to understand what can be understood and to understand that what I cannot understand is just as reliable as what I do understand. In understanding I can never find You out, O God, to perfection. In Your sight I must still be a baby, though towards my fellow Christians I may be a man. “Make me to understand.”

I love to meet with those of the Lord’s people who have had their senses exercised in Divine things and their intelligence matured. For the most part, we find disciples like babies, unskillful in the Word of Righteousness, using milk because unable to digest strong meat. Thank God for the babies! Pray God they may soon grow and develop into men! He who knows that he is a sinner and that Christ Jesus is his Savior, knows enough to save him. But we have no wish to perpetuate childishness. The spelling book is essential as a primer, but not the spelling book forever! A B C must not be sung forever in wearisome monotone! Nor must, “Only believe,” become the everlasting song!

Are there not other Truths of God deeper and higher? There is the grand analogy of the faith! There is the doctrine of the Covenant! There is the doctrine of Election! There is the doctrine of the Union of the saints with Jesus Christ! These are the deep things of God and I think we should pray, “Make me, Lord, to understand them.” Yet the best understanding is that which aims at personal holiness. “Make me to understand the way of Your precepts.” Lord, if I cannot grapple with doctrine, let me know which is the right way for me to take in my daily life. If sometimes Your Truth staggers me and I cannot see where this Truth of God squares with that,

yet Lord grant that integrity and uprightness may preserve me! So make me to know and understand the way of Your statutes that if I am tempted and the Tempter come as an angel of light, I may so understand the difference between a true angel of light and the mock angel of light that I may not be taken in the snare. “Make me to understand the way of Your statutes.” May my eyes be keen to know the right in all its tangles. May I follow the silken clue of uprightness where it seems to wind and twist. Give Your servant such a clear understanding of what Israel ought to do and of what he, himself, ought to do as a part of Israel, that he may never miss his way.

This is the best kind of understanding in all the world. The Psalmist appeals to the Fountain of all wisdom, the Source from where all knowledge springs. Who can put wisdom in the inward parts but the Lord? Or who can give understanding to the heart but God Most High? Our parents and our Sunday school teachers taught us the rudiments while we were supple and pliant with tender age. We thank them much and we esteem them highly. Yet they could only teach the Law and imprint, if possible, the letter of it on our memory, although even that we often repeated and as often forgot. It is the Lord that teaches us to profit by the Divine Spirit. How very wonderfully the Lord teaches us! Some lessons have to be whipped into us—well, He does not spare the rod for our crying! Other lessons can only be burnt into us as with a hot iron.

Some of us can bless the Lord that we bear in our body the prints of the Lord Jesus, that He branded His Truth into our very flesh and bones so that we cannot, now, miss it, but must understand it. Into what strange places God will put His children! You have heard of colleges called by odd names—Brasen-nose and the like—but the most amazing college I ever heard of was the whale’s belly! Jonah would never have bowed himself to Sovereign Grace had he not been cast into the deep, compassed about with floods and overwhelmed with billows and waves. But the soundness of his doctrine was very palpable in the voice of his thanksgiving, for as soon as he came out of the whale’s belly, he said, “Salvation is of the Lord”! A must college for a Prophet!

But we may be content to leave the college to God and, if we are, like Joseph, sold into Egypt, or like the Hebrew children, carried captive into Babylon, or wherever it may be—so long as He makes us to understand the way of His precepts we may be well content! Christ taught only three of His 12 Apostles upon Tabor, but 11 of them in Gethsemane. Some, though favored much with high joys, learn more by deep sorrows. He takes but three of them into the chamber where He raises the dead girl, for all His wonders are not to be seen by all His followers. But they may all behold Him on the Cross and learn the sweet wonders of His dying love!

I would not be satisfied, dear Brothers and Sisters, without trying to understand all that can be understood of the love of Jesus Christ and of all those precious Truths that make up the way of God’s precepts. He is a poor scholar who does not wish to learn more than lies within the bare compass of his task—a good pupil will try to get as much as he can out of his teacher. Be it your resolve and mine always to be learning! Let us never be content to lightly skim the wave or gently sip the river’s brim. Rather let us delight ourselves with diving into the clear stream of knowledge! Revelation invites research and it unfolds its choice stores only to those who search for them as for hidden treasures.

Oh, my God! I long to glean, to gather, to gain knowledge! I would gladly yield up every hour I have to sit at Your feet! To You I would surrender every faculty I have that I may be learning. By the ear, by the eye, by the taste would I imbibe instruction! Yes, and in every season of recreation I would inhale the fragrance of Your wondrous works. And when I seek repose I would lean my head upon Your bosom that I may learn Your love by the touch as well as by every other sense. May each gate of Mansoul be filled with the traffic of the precious merchandise of heavenly knowledge. And, Lord, I would open the inmost depth of my soul that Your light may shine into the most secret parts of my nature. Oh, hear my cry! Make me to understand the way of Your precepts!

II. Now, dear Friends, let us pass on to notice, in the next place, THE OCCUPATION OF THE INSTRUCTED MAN. When the Lord has taught a man the way of His precepts, it behooves him to rightly use his sacred privileges—“So shall I talk of Your wondrous works.” As a faithful teacher, let him testify of God’s works—His wondrous works. It is a sorry sermon that is all about man’s works, especially if the preacher makes out our good works to be something very remarkable. We are to preach not man’s works, but God’s works—not our own works, but the works of our great Substitute!

There are two works, especially, that you Christian people must talk about to others—the work of Christ for us and the work of the Holy Spirit in us. These are themes that will never be exhausted. The work of God the Son for us in His life and death, Resurrection and Ascension—His intercession at the right hand of God and His second advent—what a theme is before you here! How great are the works of Christ on our behalf! Preach His Substitution emphatically. Let there be no mistake about that! Let it be told that Christ stood in the place of His people and lived and died for them!

Moreover, there is the work of the Holy Spirit in us—the vital interest and importance of which it would not be possible to exaggerate. I should not like any man to try and talk about this Divine ministry unless he has been brought under its power and been led, by experience, to understand it—the work of conviction, the work of regeneration, the work of emptying, humbling and bringing down—the work of leading to repentance and to faith, the work of sanctification, the work of daily sustenance of the Divine Life, the work of perfecting the soul for Heaven! There is plenty of room for blundering, here, if God does not make you understand the way of His precepts! But if you have a good clear knowledge of what Christian life is, then, my dear Brothers and Sisters, always be dwelling on these two things—what the Lord has done for us and what the Lord is doing in us when He brings us out of darkness into His marvelous light!

The wonderful character of these works of God opens up a study on which the devout mind can discuss with ever awakening emotions of awe and delight! There are a few things in the world that men may wonder at.

They used to speak of the seven wonders of the world. I believe that there is not one of those seven wonders which some have not ceased to wonder at. If you see them a sufficient number of times you get accustomed to them and the wonder evaporates. But the works of the Lord, and these two works especially, you may think on them, meditate upon them, inspect them, enjoy them every day of a long life and the result will be, not a decrease, but an increase of your wonder! “Your wondrous works!”

God Incarnate in the Son of Mary! Wondrous work, this! God in the carpenter’s shop! The Son of God driving nails and handling a hammer! Wondrous work, this! Jesus at the loom, weaving a righteousness for His people, casting His soul into every throw of the shuttle and producing such a matchless fabric for the wedding dress of His own chosen bride that all the angels in Heaven stand still and gaze at it and marvel how such a fabric was worked! Behold Him—God, Himself, in human flesh— dying, bearing human sin with a condescension that is wonderful beyond all wonder! Behold Him casting all that sin into the depth of the sea, with wondrous might of merit, which drowned it in the bottomless abyss forever! Wondrous work, that!

Then see Him going forth again, discharged from all His suretyship engagements, having paid the debt. And behold Him nailing the handwriting of the ordinances that were against us to His Cross! Oh, wondrous work! One might talk of it by night and day and never weary. View Him rising as our Representative, guaranteeing life to us! See Him climbing the skies and casting a largesse of mercies among rebellious men. Consider the influence of His mediatorial authority, the power committed to Him by His Father, for He has power given Him over all flesh, that He may give eternal life to as many as the Father gave Him.

Listen, listen to His pleading as the Priest upon the Throne! What wondrous work is that! Still through the apocalyptic vista gaze—gaze on all the glories of the future when He shall come to reign upon the earth! There you have new fields of light breaking on your ravished view—fresh incentives to wonder, admire and worship! And what shall I say of these wondrous works which seem so near and so familiar to our observation and yet baffle our investigation, till the more we scrutinize them the more amazement we feel? The Church in the world kept alive from generation to generation by One whose Presence was promised, was bestowed and is now felt and proved by the saints—the blessed Paraclete, the Comforter whom Jesus sent from the Father! By His agency long seasons of drought and despondency have been ever and again succeeded by times of refreshing from the Presence of the Lord by revivals and renewals of signs and wonders such as began but did not end in the day of Pentecost!

I never know which to wonder at most—God in human flesh, the Incarnate Son—or the Holy Spirit dwelling in man! The indwelling is as wonderful as the Incarnation! Let every Gospel teacher yield up his own soul to the wonder and gratitude which these works of God are fitted to inspire. I like to see the preacher, when he is talking about these things, look like a man wonderstruck, gazing forth on a vast expanse, lost in immensity! As if he were far out at sea, trembling with adoration! As if the chords of his nature vibrated to the mystery and awe that encircle him. There are lovely traces of God’s transcendent skill in things minute when peered at through a microscope—but these wondrous works of God are of another order! They display His grander power!

Tell not the old, old story as if it had grown trite and trifling in your ears and tripped from off your tongue. Listen to the slow deep mellow voice of the mighty ocean of Grace until your soul faints within you! Then speak in tones of strong emotion like those of Paul—“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!” Yet it becomes you to speak very plainly. See how it is put. “I will talk of Your wondrous works.” Talk is the simplest mode of speech. You cannot all preach, but you can all talk and, if some preachers would refrain from rhetoric and tell their plain unvarnished tale, they would succeed better than they do now.

Do you think that God meant His ministers to kill themselves in order come out on Sundays with one or two splendid displays of “intellect” and eloquence? Surely this is not God’s way of doing things! I do not believe that Paul ever preached a fine sermon, or that Peter ever dreamed of any display of intellect. I asked, the other day, of one who had heard a sermon, if it was likely that sinners would be converted by it. He said, “Oh no! By no means! But it was an intellectual treat.” Is there anywhere in the Bible a word about intellectual treats, or anything approximating to such an idea?

Is there not a country on the other side of the sea where they are attempting fine flashy oratory sermons that remind you of the way in which they finish up the fireworks—discourses made up of blue lights and blazes? They call it a “peroration,” I believe. But the way for the Christian—the real Christian—is to talk of God’s wondrous works! Tell me the old, old story! Tell it not stately, but tell it simply, as to a little child! More Glory will come to God from that, more comfort to your soul in reflection and more benefit to the souls of those you teach than from all the flights of poetry or the flourishes of rounded periods. They that would win souls must take David’s words here, and say, “Make me to understand the way of Your precepts.” And so shall I give up all the “spread eagle” and, “I shall talk of Your wondrous works.”

“Blessed be God,” said a farmer at a Prayer Meeting, “that we were fed last Sunday out of a low crib, for we have mostly had the fodder so high that we poor things could not reach it.” When I heard that farmer’s thanksgiving, I thought it very wise. When a man is instructed in the faith, he will often speak about these things. Such conversation may be frequent without being irksome. David says, “I will talk.” Preaching is an exercise to be undertaken now and then, but talking, I believe, is capable of being carried on by some people very nearly every minute of the day. Certainly few persons account it a hardship to talk every day! And when God makes us to understand the way of His precepts, we shall have the Gospel at our fingertips so that whoever we meet with, we shall be able to talk to them in an earnest and simple style about God’s salvation.

I would, dear Friends, that our talk were always seasoned with salt— that our most common conversation were bedewed with heavenly unction, ministering Grace unto the hearers. But though very plain and very frequent, the good Psalmist’s talk was very much to the point and it did not

lack propriety, for he says, “So shall I talk of Your wondrous works.” What does he mean? Why, according to

 understanding. “Make me to understand and then I shall talk like an intelligent man.” May you, Brothers and Sisters, who talk about Jesus Christ be enabled to talk about Him in a wise way. Very serious mischief has often come from harping upon some one string. Some men are far more interested in stating their own ideals than in unfolding God’s counsels. If we understand the way of God’s precepts, acquire the language of it, get into the groove of it—then we shall talk with understanding—and there will be a harmony and a wisdom about our utterances which will be blessed to the edification of the hearers.

III. We will close by noticing THE INTIMATE RELATION BETWEEN THE PRAYER OF THE STUDENT AND THE PURSUIT THAT HE SUBSEQUENTLY FOLLOWED. “Make me to understand the way of Your precepts: so shall I talk of Your wondrous works.” The connection lies partly in the enchantment of this knowledge and the passion to communicate it. A man who understands Christ and His mediatorial work—and the Spirit and His sanctifying work—cannot be silent! The fire once kindled, the flames will spread. He will be so transported with wonder, admiration and adoring gratitude at the great mercy and love of God that it will cause a fermentation within his breast.

He will be like a full vessel needing vent and he must have it. As with a fire in his bones, he will exclaim, “Woe is me if I preach not the Gospel!” I would to God there were a deeper understanding of the ways of God, for then many silent tongues would speak. The theme, itself, without any remarkable gifts on the part of the man, would suffice to secure the attention it strongly claims. As the heart swells with thankfulness, the lips burst forth spontaneously into song. Doubtless Hannah would tell you that it was easier for a barren wife to restrain her tears than for a joyful mother to stifle her hymn of praise!

Did Jesus love you when you were all forlorn? Did He find you, when a stranger, and prove Himself your Friend? Did He shelter you, when a sinner, and shield you from all harm? Did He die, that you might live? Do you know that Jesus is Your near kinsman and that He takes great delight in redeeming you for Himself? Let the truth of this but dawn on your heart and though your tongue were dumb before, it must now begin to talk—

*“Now will I tell to sinners round,  
What a dear Savior I have found,  
I’ll point to His redeeming blood  
And say, ‘Behold the way to God.’”*

May this stir up some of you who love the Lord and yet never talk about Him! May it lead you to a holy searching of heart. Surely you have not such an understanding of Him as you ought to have, or else sometimes your silence would be thawed and your words would betray your strong emotions. If I understand the way of God’s precepts, then I shall be fully furnished with matter to talk of His wondrous works!

What a dreadful thing it must be for a man to set up to be a teacher of others if he does not know the things of God, experimentally, himself. It can be done, you know, and done very cheaply. You can buy sermons ready lithographed and guaranteed not to have been preached within so many miles—for nine pence each! You can be furnished with them for 10 shillings and sixpence a quarter. But there will be a heavy account at the last for the man who does that sort of thing! It is easy for you to teach in your class by reading the Sunday School Union notes, getting up the lesson and having it all in your head. Ah, but, my dear Friends, how will you answer for having taught children in the Sunday school when you have never been God’s child and never have been taught of God yourself? “Unto the wicked God says, What have you to do to declare My statutes, or to take My name into your mouth?”

Do not try to teach others what you do not understand yourself! Go down on your knees and cry, “Make Me to understand the way of Your precepts, so shall I talk of Your wondrous works.” Dear Brethren, especially you who are to be ministers of the Gospel and have begun to preach—seek a deeper understanding of Divine things, or else your ministry will be lean and poverty-stricken. Unless you are taken into the confidence of God and initiated into His counsels, you cannot possibly discharge the solemn duties which lie upon the ambassador for Christ! Cry mightily to be well-filled with an understanding of the Gospel—and so shall you overflow to others and talk of God’s wondrous works! Such sound education will clothe you with authority.

A man who, in his own heart, knows what he is talking about and preaches what he has tasted and handled of the good Word of Grace, will put weight into every utterance. It matters but little what language he uses—the power lies not in the garnishing, but in the Truth of God, itself, which he proclaims! It is not the polish of his speech but the fervor of his soul which gives force to his persuasions. Oh, how often my heart has been refreshed by a humble testimony from a poor man who has talked only about what the Lord has done for him! What a power there is about experimental talk! Dry doctrine and pious platitudes borrowed from books fall flat on the ears and are gall to the taste—but he who talks of the things which he has made touching the King—he has a tongue like the pen of a ready writer!

I know aged Christians who seem, every time they speak, to drop diamonds and emeralds from their lips. One could wish to treasure up every syllable they utter, not because there is anything very ingenious or original in any sentence, but because there is a sound of abundance of rain in every word. There is a Divine depth, a sacred sweetness, a leaping of life in each broken utterance which is born on their lips! You say, “That man knows more than he tells. He does not expose all his wares in the window. He has been in the secret place of communion. His face shines though his voice falters.” Such teachers may you and I prove in our riper years, having light in ourselves and illuminating all who are within the range of our influence! What God has led us to understand, may we be the means of communicating by our ordinary conversation, by speech which is simple, unostentatious, yet earnest, faithful and heavenly-minded.

Brothers and Sisters, not all can preach, but all can be up and doing, teaching others what you know! Do not try to teach them what you do not know. As far as you know Christ, speak about Him to your kinsfolk and acquaintances, your friends and neighbors. Our dear Brother and Elder,

the late Mr. Verdon, on such a night as this would have been anxiously looking after any person who seemed to have heard with thankfulness— and he would not have suffered them to leave the place without accosting them in his own gentle manner and beginning to talk to them about Christ.

I need some more like he! He has gone Home. I pray the Lord that some may be baptized for the dead, to stand in his place and fill up the gap which his removal has made in our ranks. We need a host of wise and prudent Christian talkers. I do not know that we have, at present, any more urgent need—people who can talk on the train, can talk by the roadside, can talk in the kitchen, can talk in the workshop, can talk across a counter—can, in fact, make opportunities to talk of Jesus! I need you, dear Friends, to ask the Lord to qualify you for this service and lead you into it. Some of you appear to be marching backward, for you are even more reticent than you used to be! I would have you like Archimedes when he found out his secret and could not keep it for very joy, but ran down the street crying out,” I have found it! I have found it!”

Come, break your guilty silence and cry aloud, “I have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets did write, and I cannot help talking about Him.” As for others of you who are not Believers, I pray the Lord that you may give a listening ear to the message which I ask others to tell. Here it is—“Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Whoever believes in Him has everlasting life.” “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” The Lord bring you to accept these tidings, to believe in Jesus and to find eternal life. Amen.

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MY PRAYER  
NO. 1072

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 22, 1872, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Quicken me in Your way.”  
Psalm 119:37.**

I THINK you will find the prayer for quickening repeated nine times in this Psalm. The form of it differs but it is always the same vehement cry, “Quicken me, O Lord.” In addition to this you will hear David twice acknowledge that God had quickened him, saying on one occasion, “Your Word has quickened me,” and in another place, “Your precepts have quickened me,” so that 11 times in one Psalm David turns his contemplations to the subject of quickening. This shows us the very great importance which he attached to it.

Remember well that this Psalm is dedicated to the praise of the Word of God. Throughout its entire length it sounds forth the honor of God’s statutes and in some way or other the Word of the Lord is mentioned in every one of its 176 verses. The Psalm is a star of the first magnitude and all its beams direct us to the Divine statutes. It is clear from this that there must be an intimate connection between quickening and the Word of God. Indeed, it is so, for when we are much acquainted with the Word of God we also discover more of our own deadness and lack of spiritual life.

And, moreover, inasmuch as we find David twice blessing God that the Word had quickened him, we see another connection between the Word and quickening, namely, that while the Word convinces us of our death, it is also the means in the hand of the Spirit of God of our resurrection to newness of life. It kills, but it also makes alive! It quickens and it sustains what it begets. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceeds out of the mouth of God shall man live.”

Would you mourn your sluggishness? See it in the light of God’s Word. Would you escape from your sloth? Be animated by the holy warmth of the revealed Truth of God. For both purposes, for conviction and for edification, the precious Truths which are set forth in Scripture by the Holy Spirit will be exceedingly efficacious.

I purpose, this morning, in handling the brief prayer of our text, to note, first, that it deals with the Believer’s frequent need. Secondly, it directs him to the sole Worker of his quickening. Thirdly, it describes the true sphere of renewed spiritual vigor. And fourthly, it denotes that there may be special reasons and seasons when we should say, “Quicken me.”

I. The prayer before us, “Quicken me in Your way,” DEALS WITH THE BELIEVER’S FREQUENT NEED. I am sure that this is a frequent need of Believers because we find David in this Psalm so often confessing his need—and where the best of God’s servants feel their need of a thing—we may be quite sure that the rest of the family are under the same necessity. David seems to have been by no means sluggish in the Divine life. That wonderful photograph of his internal being which we have in the book of Psalms shows us that he was a man of intensely fervent love to God. We see he was a man whose nature was vital to a degree of sensitive and energetic energy seldom, if ever, exceeded.

Panting, crying, pleading, singing, rejoicing, exulting—he was all life and of him it could not be said that he was neither cold nor hot. Notwithstanding the grievous fault into which he fell, his inner life was, as a rule, vigorous, healthy and energetic. And yet that man of God prayed often, “Quicken me.” Oh my Soul, you are not to be compared with David for a single moment! What need, then, have you to pray again and again, even with agony of soul, “Quicken me, O God!”

But, Beloved, there is no reason to refer to others of God’s servants for proof of this. You yourselves know, in your own souls, that your spirit is most apt to become sluggish and that you have need frequently to put up the prayer, “Quicken me.” Apart from Him who is your life, what are you but a mass of corruption? You know this experimentally, do you not? There are some among you who have received a more abundant measure of spiritual life than the preacher has yet obtained, but I fear that the great majority of us are in the very opposite condition and have need to sigh and cry over our lack of inward strength. We need to lament more deeply our manifold deficiencies. If there is a prayer in this Bible which well becomes my lips, it is just this, “Lord, quicken me in Your way.”

I fear that those who are least ready to confess this are the very persons who ought to admit it first, and I am certain that a large number of God’s people feel that they are dry and sapless and have need to be revived by life from above. Let us think over this matter a minute. Some years ago we needed quickening most emphatically, but then we had no power to pray, “Quicken me,” for we were dead in trespasses and sins. No dead man ever prayed to be quickened! Such a prayer would be an index of life. A really spiritual prayer for quickening can only come from those in whom the quickening Spirit has already taken up His abode!

Now, Beloved, blessed be the name of the Lord, we are no longer dead as we once were—the Spirit of God has breathed into our nostrils the breath of life and we have become living souls in the family of God. Let us be thankful for this, but let us, as we look around upon the spiritually dead who swarm our streets, take care to pray for them, “Lord, quicken the dead in sin.” Let our relatives be the special objects of our prayers for quickening. If we have a brother who is rotting in the grave of his iniquities, let us pray the Master to say, “Lazarus, come forth.” If we have a son who is dead in sin, let us ask the Lord to raise him up even from the bier of his transgressions. Or if it is a little daughter at home, fair and lovely yet unquickened, let our prayer be to the great Master that He would come and raise her up. He is able to raise any of the spiritually dead for He has raised us. Let our own conversion encourage us in praying for the spiritual resurrection of others.

But, Brothers and Sisters, although we ourselves are quickened in that sense we have still need to continue the prayer. Do you remember the days of your first awakening, when you had only sufficient life to mourn and lament that you had so little? The first sense of life in you was painful—you were under a sense of sin and your guilt lay heavy upon you— you had only life enough to dread the death that never dies. Your life did little else for you but enable you to tremble, to mourn, to dread and to reproach yourself. It was the dark side of life—the pain which is the true evidence of vitality but is terrible to endure. Then you needed fuller light and healthier life and no prayer could have better suited you than this which is now before us, “Quicken me.” Oh, the agonizing cries of awakened sinners! Theirs are no mimicries, but stern realities! Believe me, they pray.

Since that season, for blessed be God that state is over now, we have joy and peace in believing—not all the joy and peace we could wish, but still a good share of it. But we still have great cause to cry aloud and that right often, “Quicken me.” For instance, have you never felt the need of this prayer when you have been cast down by affliction? The spirit, broken and bruised, can only rally through an infusion of fresh life. When you could not get a grip at the promises because the hand of your faith was numbed, you needed an increased vitality. In temporal trial more Grace was your best support—and when the trouble was not only bodily, but spiritual—then increased inner life was the doubly efficacious remedy.

Do you remember when you were broken in pieces all asunder through some surprising sin and God, in chastisement, seemed to hunt you with the terrors of His Law? Then your expiring faith and swooning hope needed a new vitality! There was no restored joy for you till you learned, again, the meaning of the Redeemer’s words, “I am the Life.” Lying at the foot of His Cross you saw the vital blood flowing from His dear wounds and you cried “Quicken me!” Forth from the heart of Jesus came a stream of warm life which entered your soul, renewed your faith, inspired you with sacred confidence and diffused within your spirit a blessed calm in which you softly breathed the life of God and rose as one quickened from among the dead!

How many times, also, have you been the victim of worldliness, that horrible swoon of the heart towards Christ? Even over those who try to live nearest to God this evil influence exerts itself like some stifling vapor, engendering a dreadful sleepiness, even where it cannot accomplish death. Men after God’s own heart have cried, “My soul cleaves to the dust: quicken me, O God!” You have loved some earthly thing—some child, perhaps, has clambered into your heart’s throne while it has been fondled on your knee. Lawful loves have become engrossing and have eaten the Lord’s portion. The Son of David has been displaced by an usurper, or at least another throne has been set up in His palace. Have you not been horrified at your own idolatry and resolved to have done with it, cost what it may?

You have sought for the axe which should remove the right hand of sin, the hammer which should dash down the usurper’s image—but your heart has failed you, the fascination of the sin has spell-bound you! Around you the coils of the serpent have been twined and you could not tear them off, for a poison chilled your blood and stupefied your brain and heart. Ah, then you saw the beauty of the prayer, “Quicken me,” and well was it for you that, feebly as you uttered it, it was answered from the Throne of Mercy! What could have stood you in good stead if you had been left a victim to the deadly drugs and mortal opiates of sin?

You, my Brothers, who are much engaged in business from morning to night—when things go with you very roughly, or on the other hand when they go with you very smoothly—have the deepest cause to pray, “Lord quicken me.” Earth sticks to our hearts, especially those forms of it known as gold and silver—and lumps of adhesive earth make a pilgrim’s progress tardy. You cannot wrestle in prayer while you are loaded down with worldly cares! No runner can win a race when he stoops under great weights. It is impossible to commune with God and yet to fix one’s heart on money-making. While business is what it is and the wheels of trade revolve at such a terrific rate, men had need be very vigorous in Divine Grace or their souls will be ground to dust amid their own machinery.

Oh you very busy men, you ought day by day to plead with the Lord— “Quicken me my God, lest I be overcome by the deadly influences of the world.” Though I mingle little with the business or the politics of the hour, I feel a drowsy influence creep over me from the smoke of these tents of Kedar in which I dwell, like that which Bunyan mentions in his description of the Enchanted Ground where the very air made men drowsy. This influence tends to preaching mechanically, as an automaton might do if properly wound up, and it leads to praying by routine after the manner of a Tibetan windmill or a Ritualistic priest.

Hideous is this temptation to perform one’s duties officially—because it is the time to do this and the proper hour to do that! Oh, my God, deliver us from crawling along in the ruts and slipping sleepily along the grooves! We need life, vivacity, vigor, diligence, fervor, passion, vehemence in the service of our God or else our Christianity is worth no more than a nutshell out of which the worm has eaten the kernel and left nothing but rottenness! Our God is a consuming fire and only by fire can we worship Him! Sacrifices without heart are an abomination to Him. The name to live is loathsome unless the spirit of life is present. The garments of a man may frighten birds, but only the heart and soul of manhood can avail with Heaven! Without the living soul of sincerity and earnestness, what is religion but a tomb, whitewashed on the outside but rotten within? We must have life! First, last and midst, we must have life! Therefore to all professors I commend this prayer, “Quicken me.”

My Brothers and Sisters, do not the most warm-hearted among us feel the need of more quickening? Let us consider a few matters which may awaken our desires more fully. First, let us enquire if we are as earnest in the things of God as in the common things of daily life? Is our soul as vigorous in its acts for God as in its emotions towards man? We are told by the Spirit that the time is short and it remains that those who have wives be as though they had not; they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not and they that weep as though they wept not because all these things are passing away and therefore our emotions about them should be comparatively slight.

But spiritual things, seeing they endure forever, ought to have a lodgment in the center of our being and concerning them we should think deeply and feel strongly. Sorrow for sin should be the keenest sorrow. Joy in the Lord should be the loftiest of joy. Is it so? How do you find it with yourselves? Suppose it is the love of a newly-married wife—is there not an intensity about it which needs no inflaming? Do you always or often find your soul so ardent towards the Lord Jesus Christ? Yet ought He not to be before all others? Or suppose it is your weeping for your lost husband or your dear departed child—you do not need excitement to grief—no, your hearts bleed all too freely and you need arguments to relieve your sorrows!

Is it thus when you lament the dishonor done to the name of Jesus? Are the water floods quite as plentiful? Is repentance as deep and living an emotion with you as sorrow under bereavement? I fear that in these earthly matters our heart is wax and in spiritual things it is as the nether millstone. Yet is it sad, indeed, that our affections entwine themselves about a mere creature but put forth no tendrils towards the Lord of Love who laid down His life for us! If you are suddenly made possessors of wealth, the joy you have over your substance is very manifest. None can question it. Or if your wealth is taken away by some loss in trade or otherwise, your distress is by no means superficial. I pray you tell me, are you equally concerned about the true riches?

If you have found the priceless pearl, are you enchanted with it? If you have lost fellowship with Jesus, does the loss depress your spirit? Are you as eager to be rich in Grace as to be great in wealth? Do you prize Christ as you do your profits? Are you as eager in a Prayer Meeting as you are in the market? I fear, Brothers and Sisters, that a comparison between our zeal for temporal and spiritual things would lead to very humbling conclusions and give us reason to cry, “Lord, deaden me to this world, but quicken me towards the world to come.”

The same truth will be apparent if we will think of the earnestness of men of the world in their callings and pursuits. How men will wear themselves out in seeking the secular objects on which their hearts are set! To what sacrifices will they expose themselves! The votaries of science altogether shame the followers of religion. They have penetrated into the densest swamps defying fever and death. They have lost themselves among the wildest savages, or they have died amidst eternal snows. Have they not lost their lives while using deadly drugs out of which they hoped to discover curative agents? Or worn away their eyesight by weary night watching of the orbs of Heaven? Science daily increases her martyrologies but where do we find ours? Where is the chivalry of Christians? Alas, where survives the heroism of the Cross?

In former times the followers of Christ counted not their lives dear unto them for His sake. But now we hug ourselves in ease and venture little for the Lord. The world has warm followers and devoted friends, but Jesus is attended by a lukewarm band of men who are more likely to sleep at Gethsemane’s gates than to watch with Him for a single hour. Oh Lord of Love, will You not quicken us? Behold our need! Forgive our sin and from this good hour teach us how to live! We shall surely also be rebuked if we think of the zeal of some of the Lord’s servants. Their lives should make us feel how little life we have. Put yourself, beloved Brother, side by side with Paul for a few minutes. Think of his unquenchable zeal. Remember his voluntary exposure to a thousand risks—his suffering and his labors for the propagation of his Master’s Gospel. Where are we, and what are we? Alas, we blush and sink to nothing in the presence of such a man!

Others of like energy have been and are in the Church. Why are we so unlike them? Shame, shame upon us! Perhaps it may touch us with some degree of feeling if we recall what our own zeal was at one time. It never was much to boast of—when we were most earnest we could well have borne to be heated seven times hotter and yet not become too much inflamed—but are we now as zealous as once we were? May I ask you to look back upon the early days of your religion? Oh you then ran where now you creep! You blazed and glowed where now but a few sparks are left! The love of your espousals, when you went after your Master into the wilderness, when nothing was too heavy or too hard for His dear sake— where is it now? Where is it now?

As you grew in years you should have grown in zeal, for you know more of Him and you have received more from Him. But is it so? Why, we thought we would push the Church before us or drag the world behind us and we meant to do I know not what—but have we done it? Then we cried, “Who are you, great mountain?” “Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain.” But the great mountain remains where it was because our faith has declined and our zeal has flagged. Oh, for the Spirit to re-baptize us into the fullness of His life and strength!

Once more, think, dear Friends, of our condition of spiritual life and of what it ought to be when we remember our obligations to our Savior. Stand in spirit at the foot of the Cross and see the five wounds and the precious blood that bought us. Can you remain unmoved? Do we gaze into yon dear face, that mirror of love and grief, and feel no love to Him? Can we think of His returning into His Glory, and bearing our names upon His breastplate day and night before the Eternal Throne and feel no enthusiasm for Him? Can we meditate upon Him as from before all worlds loving us, and to all worlds loving us still, and yet remain indifferent?

Why, Sirs, if we lived for Jesus solely and evermore and died a thousand deaths for Him, these were cheap things to lay at the foot of His dear Cross! He deserves infinitely more from us! Think, I pray you, of all the Truths of our religion and ask yourselves what kind of life they require of us. We believe that men are lost and shall we be idle when in our hands is the Gospel which alone can save them? We know that men are passing into a condition in which they shall forever abide, everlastingly blessed or eternally accursed of God—and only the Truth of God that we have to tell them can secure them from unending misery—and can we withhold the saving Word?

I do not wonder that those who believe the contrary to this should take things coolly, but I do marvel at ourselves that we are so insane at heart that we are not moved to passionate earnestness for ourselves and our fellow men! Fanaticism itself were, under some aspects of it, nothing but cold-blooded reason in the face of such Truths as these! We ought to live impassioned lives, full of flaming energy and we would if this prayer were heard, “Quicken me in Your way.” Thus I have spoken upon the first head. Now may we be helped to dwell upon the second and may the Spirit bless us thereby.

II. Our text DIRECTS US TO THE SOLE WORKER OF QUICKENING. “Quicken me.” David seeks quickening from the Lord alone. He goes at once to Him in whom were all his fresh springs. Life is the peculiar sphere of God—He is the Lord and Giver of life. No man ever received spiritual life, or the renewal of it, from any other source but the living God. Beloved, this is worth remembering, for we are very apt, when we feel ourselves declining, to look anywhere but to the Lord. We too often look within. “Why seek you the living among the dead?” You might find a diamond upon a dunghill, but you will never find spiritual refreshing in human nature. Look, then, to some better source than to the howling wilderness of self.

We are very apt, also, to think that in the use of the means of Grace we shall necessarily obtain reviving and refreshing. “If I can hear Mr. So-andSo preach, who has often laid his hands among my heart-strings and brought out music there, then I should be again awakened. Oh, could I hear him once again I should see better days.” You do not know. That beloved voice may have lost all power over you. If you look to the servant and not to the Master, the Master will leave the servant and the servant will be of no use to you. Dig the pools by all manner of means—passing through the valley of Baca make it a well, but remember, the liferefreshing water does not rise from the bottom of the well, it drops from above—“the rain also fill the pools.”

God out of Heaven, alone, can make instrumentality to be of vital service to us. Not even the sweet succors of the Communion Table can bring back vigorous life to the Christian apart from the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Rest you not in the outward, for it cannot touch the inward! Above all, never go to the law for reviving. Do not begin chiding yourself by saying, “This I ought to have done and I shall lose the love of God if I do not,” and so on. That is all legal. The child of God, when he hears the roar of Sinai’s thunder, sinks into a deeper death—it cannot rouse him into life. Slaves may be moved by terror, but not the true born child of God—a nobler motive sways his heart. Go not, then, to rewards and punishments for your life—you will never find it there. The ministry of the Law is the ministry of death, not of life. We must take ourselves to the Spirit of God who is the gift of the Gospel, not of the Law. Remember, Beloved, that Jesus Christ is come that we might have life and that we might have it more abundantly!

Now, if any poor soul first of all obtained life from looking alone to Jesus it is clear that if she wants more life she must get it in the same way. They say that for a sick man his native air is the best. My native air was Calvary—was it not yours, dear Brothers and Sisters? Let us together seek the blood-stained spot. Go and breathe the atmosphere of atoning love again! Get back to the foot of the Cross once more and you will find effectual quickening. The Holy Spirit is the great Agent by whom the life of Jesus is infused into our nature. The Holy Spirit at this moment can come upon the coldest heart in this place and make it flame and blaze with more than angelic ardor! You are like a bush at this moment, dry and dark, but God has but to put one spark of His life in you and you will be like the bush in Horeb which flamed like the sun.

Dear Sister, have you fallen very low? Go to God, for He can lift you up when no one else can. My ministry cannot quicken you, but the Lord can. He has only to send forth the Divine Life and the dullest and most slothful, the most barren, the most dead among us would become warm with Apostolic fervor and the Divine Life would make us shine as the glittering seraphim which surround the burning Throne! Oh God, how this moves us to pray to You! You can do it. Do it now! “Quicken me in Your way!”

Did you notice that in the text nothing is said about the means by which the Lord is to quicken us? David leaves that to God’s discretion. Let Him use His own methods. There is a prayer—you will find it in the 149th verse, and also in the 156th—in which David prays, “Quicken me in Your judgment,” as if he left it to infinite prudence to select its own methods. He did not pretend to say what was the best way, but left himself in God’s hands, only praying, “Lord, quicken me.” Let us consider the various methods by which the Lord can quicken His people. Usually He does it by His Word. “Your Word has quickened me.”

There are promises in God’s Word of such effectual restorative power, that if they are but fed upon and their nutriment absorbed into our nature, they will make a dwarf into a giant in the twinkling of an eye! And he who lies faint upon the ground and cannot move hand or foot shall mount upon the wings of eagles, and run and not be weary, if but one Word out of the mouth of God is applied to him by the Spirit. Sometimes, however, God uses other instruments, such as affliction. It is wonderful how a little touch of the spur will quicken our sluggish natures! God has ways and means of touching our flesh and bone and rendering sleep an impossibility in more senses than one. Personal affliction is like a tonic medicine, by which our relaxed energies are strung up again—but to this end it must be sanctified, or it will fail. Blessed be God for a flick of His whip! We might else have stumbled in our sleep and fallen. It does good to such sorry jades as we are. I pray that some of you may get a touch of it, for you are dull enough. Just a touch now and then does all of us good and rest assured we shall have it, too, if we do not keep awake without it, for God loves us too well to withhold His paternal rod.

At the same time, He can quicken us by great mercies. A man may be stirred up to diligence by a sense of gratitude to God for great mercies. I grant you it does not always have that effect, but it ought to. Oh, if our hearts were right, it would be sweet to say, “Here is another mercy, another favor from God, this binds me with another cord to His service. I will love Him more and devote myself more intensely to His work.” Christian example, too, sometimes stirs us up. I believe the reading of holy biographies has been exceedingly blessed of God. The life of such a man as M’Cheyne, or the diary of Brainerd, or the story of Whitfield’s ministry— such things make us think, “What are we? What are we living for?” Put microscopes upon our eyes and yet we can hardly see ourselves, we are so little—we are as grasshoppers in their sight—yes, we are as grasshoppers in our own sight. This stimulates us.

On the other hand, if you fall in with a number of idle dolts of professors, as sometimes you do, your indignation at them will help to excite you to zeal, or it ought to do so. We have known some who have said, “I am superior to these, at any rate,” and therefore congratulating themselves they have gradually sunk down to the same ignominious level. But in a true heart the sluggishness of others is a spur to greater exertion, for such a man says, “Is my Master served in such a beggarly manner as this? Then will I serve Him with all my heart, to make up for the lack of service in others.”

It is said that Augustus Caesar was once asked to a feast by one of his subjects, but the attendance was so dilatory, and the feast so meager, that he rose in disgust and said he supposed he was invited to be honored, but he had discovered that it was intended to insult him. Truly in many a congregation of Christians—yes, even of our own denomination— the worship of God is done in such a mean, stingy, dead-and-alive way that it seems as if Christ were asked to the assembly to be insulted rather than to be honored! Verily such treatment of our Lord is enough to make us weep tears of blood and then drive us onward to a service unparalleled in these frigid days!

Doubtless, too, a warm-hearted ministry has much to do with quickening us and if we have a choice of ministries in any place, we should select not that which tickles the ear most, but that which most enlivens the heart. If there are two ministries to be had, one of which is highly rhetorical and exceedingly pleasing to the intellect, but the other, though lacking in these points, nevertheless appeals to our conscience, arouses our heart, feeds us with spiritual meat and incites to higher degrees of sanctity—choose that one—for it is the ministry which God approves.

Under God’s blessing, every one of our Divine Graces may become a means of enlivening us. For instance, our faith, as it believes the great things of God, will be sure to arouse us. Our hope, as she looks forward to the bright reward, will cause us to labor where otherwise we should have fainted. And love, which is the fore-horse of the team, will draw us to serve Christ with might and main. True love to Jesus, if it comes to a great vehemence, will quicken the entire spiritual Nature and then will the prayer be answered, “Quicken me.” Thus, Brothers and Sisters, you see God has both gentle and rough means of quickening us, but for my part if He will but quicken me, I will make no bargain with Him—let Him do it as He wills. Do what You will with me, my Lord, only keep me from being lukewarm, coldhearted, dead and alive. Do make me to be all on fire for You!

Remember, Beloved, that this is a promised blessing. David says, “Quicken me according to Your Word.” You will find that thought repeated in the Psalm. It is a blessing to be pleaded for, for in a former verse David says, “Quicken me in Your righteousness,” as if he felt that God would not be righteous, would not be keeping His promise if He did not quicken him. This is a blessing which is always a token of God’s loving kindness wherever it comes. Look at the 88th verse and the 159th, and you will find them both saying, “Quicken me after Your loving kindness.”

III. Our text DESCRIBES THE SPHERE OF RENEWED VIGOR. “Quicken me in Your way.” I have no business to ask God to quicken me in my own way—no right to ask Him to quicken me merely that I may enjoy myself religiously, or be thought to be a very eminent Christian—or be able to sit down and contemplate my own beauties and perfections with self-complacency.

Somebody once said to a Christian man, “Pray, what faith have you?” Said he, “I have none to boast of.” If you see a fellow who has not a sixpence to bless himself with, if he chances to possess an imitation diamond ring, how careful he is to show it. See how he always puts out his finger to let you see it! But he who is worth his millions never thinks of displaying his gewgaws in that fashion. He that has merely a name to be religious is sure to advertise it, but he who is rich towards God is the very man who thinks himself poor, and cries out, “Lord quicken me!”

Now, what is the path in which we require to be quickened? First, it is in the way of duty in common life. Am I a father—quicken me to bring up my children aright. Am I a housewife—Lord quicken me that my duties at home may be discharged as in Your fear. Am I a servant or master—Lord, quicken me. I have my temptations in my daily calling—quicken me to stand against them. And I have also my daily opportunities for serving You—quicken me to make use of them.

It means next, “Quicken me in sacred activity.” Am I a preacher? Lord help me to preach with all my might and with all Your might, too. Am I a teacher in a school? Lord grant that I may not go to sleep over my children, but may win their souls, being blest by You with the earnestness which impresses youthful minds. Have I any other work to do? Am I a deacon or elder of the Church? Let me be so ardent in piety that my fellow members may be excited by my zeal. You have all some work to do for Christ—I hope you have. If you have not, go home and begin. But if you are doing your work, I know your prayer must be, “Quicken me in Your way.”

Did not David mean, again, quicken me in the way of patient suffering? I must not forget that there are some whose service for Christ is more honorable even than the service of the worker, but who are very apt to think that Christ considers them useless. Oh dear Brothers and Sisters, are you called to suffer bodily pain? Your work is to bring forth the inexpressibly sweet fruit of patience! Go and pray, “Quicken me in Your way.” You know the story about poor Betty, who said the Lord had called her to do this and that while she was well, but now, “The Lord has said, ‘Betty, go and lie on that bed and cough,’ ” and she said, “I will do it for His sake.” May you rejoice in the Lord’s will even if it causes you to pine, to cough and to die! Not even the song of the angels is more sweet to God’s ear than the resignation and patience which are to be found in the hearts of the sons and daughters of affliction. But you will need great Grace for this, my Sister. You will need a strong inner life for this, my Brother— therefore pray, “Quicken me in Your way.”

And the same is true of the way of hallowed worship. We need to be quickened there, quickened in private prayer, quickened in public prayer, quickened in our family devotion, quickened in our reading the Scriptures, quickened in our contemplations of Divine love, quickened in all forms of worship. We require to be quickened in our growth in Grace, in humility, in patience, in hope, in faith, in love, in every good gift. Especially we need to be quickened in communion with our God. Then let us pray the prayer, “Quicken me in Your way.”

IV. Lastly, the connection of our text DENOTES THAT THERE MAY BE SPECIAL REASONS AND SPECIAL SEASONS FOR THIS PRAYER. Just observe it. Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity, and, “Quicken me in Your way.” You see the connection of the prayer? David is exposed to a temptation—the temptation reaches him through his eyes—he prays God to turn his eyes away from it and then as a cure for the evil he says, “Quicken me.” Brethren, are you never fascinated by a sin? Whenever you have been conscious of that diabolical fascination it has been time to cry, “Quicken me in Your way.” I see I am weaker than I thought I was, Lord. I was carried away with anger when I thought I had gained a quiet temper at last. Lord, I found my heart going after an evil which I thought I had no relish for. Give me more Grace, Good Master. “Quicken me in Your way.”

A fit time for this prayer is a season of great affliction. The 107th verse teaches us that. “I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O Lord, according to Your Word.” Times of great temptation of spirit and trial of soul should be seasons for praying that God would give us extraordinary Grace. When we have been confessing past sloth we should pray for Grace to resist it in the future. If God at this time should convince any of us that we have not done 1/10th of what we ought to have done and that we have been living at a distance from the love of Christ, then the prayer should arise, “Quicken me in Your way.”

Are we just now called to some extraordinary service? Does the Lord lay upon us a heavy burden for His name? Do not let us shirk it, or say, “I cannot do it.” No, “Lord, quicken me!” Give me more Grace and then I shall be equal to any emergency, for as my days my strength shall be. This prayer is very suitable to the members of this Church because at this time we have seen so many of the good and excellent among us taken away. It scarcely seems as if the Lord would leave us any. During the last few months He has continued to sweep away one and another from us, and this week another valuable Brother has been borne to the tomb. Surely everyone remaining should say, “Lord, quicken me!” Grant that I may live so that if I am also soon to be removed I shall have finished my course and have fought the fight right through and gained the crown which Grace has promised.

Perhaps within the course of another week this black upon my pulpit may wear a third significance, as it has a double one already. From which of us shall it derive its third meaning. Do I stand here to preach in feebleness my last sermon to you? Do my beloved Church officers sit around me for the last time? And have I here members of this fellowship who are now, upon this last occasion, gathered for united worship? Brethren, it may be so! Then let us pray for quickening, that we may live while we live and waste no precious moment of our scant earthly existence! The needs of our Church are very great. If I stood in a harvest field and saw that the crop needed to be ingathered, and that a laborer was working in it till he fainted again and again—and if I saw him in great feebleness grasping the sickle, impelled by a brave spirit which kept him to his work—I think I should pray, “Lord, help me to reap, too. Help me to go into that mass of standing corn and reap, too, for I see Your servant overworked with service.”

My fellow Servants, bought with the same blood, the harvest truly is plenty but the laborers are few! I entreat you, by the blood and wounds of Him who bought you, let not a single one turn away but rise up and serve God with heart and soul and strength! Ah, we shall soon have to give account for all these things. Within a few short weeks or months we shall stand before His Judgment Seat whose eyes of fire shall read us through and through! We shall then be called to account for these ungodly ones who sit with us this day! Can we answer for their souls? We are a great Church in a great city and multitudes are dying without knowing Christ— if we do not give them all the help and instruction we can—how shall we answer for it?

If standing in this pulpit to preach to crowds I do not stir my soul and preach earnestly, how shall I answer for it? When blood shall be upon these skirts in the day of judgment—the crimson of souls damned through my indolence—how shall I answer for it? Great God, forbid that it should ever be! But it may be so with you as well as with me—each one according to his responsibility and position. I again entreat you by every name that can tell upon your hearts and arouse your consciences—pray to God to quicken you to an ardor of love and an intense diligence of service for His dear and precious name!

Ah, some of you I cannot ask to offer this prayer. I have told you why. Dead Souls, how can you pray for life? But I will ask God’s people to pray for you and I will pray for you—that the Gospel which I am commanded to preach even to the dead in sin may come with power to your souls. Here it is: “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved! He that believes not shall be damned.” The Lord lead you to obey the Word! Amen.

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DEADNESS AND QUICKNING  
NO. 2521

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**“Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken me in Your way.” Psalm 119:37.**

David, when he wrote these words, was in downright earnest. There were times with him when he grew lukewarm and cold and then we remember that he soon fell into grievous sin. But at the time when he was penning this verse, his spirit was lively, active and energetic—then it was that he prayed thus carefully about himself—“Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken me in Your way.” If you read the preceding verse, you will notice that he was thinking of the reality and depth and power of true religion, for he prayed, “Incline my heart unto Your testimonies and not to covetousness,” by which he evidently wished that his whole soul might be set upon things Divine, that, as misers seek after gold and store it up, and feast their eyes upon it, so he might be eager after the things of God and might store them up, making them to be his heavenly delicacies, his peculiar pleasure.

Dear Friends, you know as well as I do that there are many sorts of Christians. I am sorry to say that there are some nominal Christians who are no credit to Christianity—they bear the name of Christians and though I will not say that they are dead—yet certainly they are very sickly and seem ready to die! They stand among the people of God and their names are put down in the Church Book, but if they are spiritually alive, theirs is a very feeble form of life. Their heart is not in God’s ways. They are active and energetic when they get into the shop, but they are half asleep when they are in the sanctuary. They leave “footprints on the sands of time” when they are devoting their attention to politics, but when they come to the things of God, they tread so lightly that we cannot tell that they have passed that way! It seems to me to be a horrible thing that many a man should give 15 ounces out of the 16 to the world and yet that he should label himself a Christian because of that one odd ounce which he pretends to give to God! The major part of his being—his very self—runs to turn the mill-wheel of daily care and toil, but there is just a dribble that is supposed to be saved up for Christ.

Let it not be so with you, or with me, dear Friends, but let us pray that our hearts may be inclined to the things of God—that the whole force of our nature may run in a heavenly, spiritual, gracious, holy direction— and that thus we may be epistles written by God’s own right hand, “known and read of all men.” It is only a man who is in this state of spiritual health and activity who will pray such a prayer as that of our text. It is only he who gets to be so careful about his eyes that he will not look upon sin—and so careful about his daily ways—that he is lively and quick in the things of God.

Hoping and believing that I am addressing many such earnest active Christians, I suggest that we, dear Brothers and Sisters, consider this double prayer. First, it seems to me that David, here, prays for deadness in one direction. “Lord, make me dead to vanity.” And, secondly, he prays for life in another direction. “Quicken me in Your way Lord, make me alive to those things that are true and real, lasting and eternal!”

I. First, DAVID, HERE, PRAYS FOR DEADNESS IN ONE DIRECTION— deadness to the world, that he may be so dead to it that he will not even look at it. “Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity.” He wants to be so clean delivered from the love of worldly things that he may not count them worth even a glance. So far from pursuing them with his feet, or laboring for them with his hands, or going after them with his heart, he thinks them not worth a thought and prays God of His Grace to turn away his eyes from even looking upon them.

What do you think the Psalmist means, here, by, vanity? I think he probably means four things, or one thing which may be seen under four aspects. Many a Christian prays, “Lord, turn away my eyes from beholding vanity,” that is, frivolity. To some men, life is all trifling—they are the butterflies of God’s garden, alighting on flowers, but never sucking the honey out of them. They just dance their little hour in the sunbeam of existence, as the gnats do on a summer’s evening. They come, they dance, they die—and that is the end of them so far as this life is concerned. Even in our way there will frequently come frivolous things. I do not say that Christians are to disregard all trifles, or that there are not things, very trifling in themselves, which may be sanctified and used for purposes of restoration and recreation, and so be made beneficial to us.

But I do say this—if a man, calling himself a Christian, should live for mere frivolity—if to him life should be all play and no work, a daydream and not a battle. If he should make his life to be, as the poet puts it—

*“Like ocean into tempest tossed,*

*To waft a feather, or to drown a fly,”*  
it is a sad pity, it is a grievous evil that it should be so! I believe that there are many professing Christians who are spending their lives in drawing up buckets full of nothing because they let them down into dry wells. They have nothing particular to do and they do it very diligently— and nothing else. They spend their years, from the beginning of January to the end of December, like a tale that is told.

Now, instead of acting thus, the man who leads the true life, the heroic life, the real life, makes everything sublime, and his prayer is that his eyes may be turned away from beholding frivolities. We have put away childish things, for Christ has made us men. We cannot be decoyed, again, into kindergarten, to learn those “beggarly elements of the world” that are only fit for tiny children. We are on the confines of the eternal state. We are standing, even now, hard by the frontier of the Glory Land. Christ has bought us with His blood and the trumpets of His coming are already sounding in our ears! God forbid that we should sleep, as others do, and toy and play as so many around us do! Our prayer is, “Turn away our eyes from beholding vanity.” We have something better to do than to make this world into a mere theater and to let it be true of us that this life is only a play, with men and women as the actors in it. No—

*“Life is real, life is earnest,”*  
now that we have been quickened by the Spirit of God and have entered into the life of God!

I think there is also another meaning in this word, vanity, namely, carnality. You know, Beloved, that the things of this life belong to the flesh—they are seen, tasted, handled and felt. But then, the things that are seen are temporal—the things that can be touched and of which the senses are cognizant—are all passing away. These things that we see, taste, grasp and hold are but for time. They are all going. Men think that spiritual things are dreams and that temporal things are realities—but it is the other way around—the things that are not seen are eternal! These invisible things shall last forever! When eyes are blind in the grave and ears are deaf beneath the sod, then shall the invisible become the more real to us—when eyes and ears and mere earthly senses have passed away from us.

Sometimes the Christian man gets into this state when he asks, “What shell I eat? What shall I drink and with what shall I be clothed?” I cannot and I do not want to be asking and answering those questions forever. “After all these things do the Gentiles seek.” I am now of a higher race than the mere worldling! There is another life now flowing in my veins. I cannot live for these temporal things. I may use them, but I must not abuse them. I may have them under my feet, but I must not permit them to crush me and to be above my head. I can float over them, as a ship sails over the sea, but I cannot let them into myself, for that were to sink the ship, as when the vessel ships a great sea and begins to go down with the weight. I must not let my heart be troubled, even though my head may sometimes seem to be. No, a Christian man turns right away from what, to other men, seems the most important business of life, and he says, “Lord, it is all vanity to me.” To children of God, these things seem so frail, so fleeting as to be scarcely worth a thought! And we get away into our chamber and shut the door—and we speak in secret to our Father who sees in secret. And then all things apart from Him grow to be mere vanity, smoke, folly and sin. We cannot be always pestered with these daily cares. No, Lord, turn away our eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken us in Your way!

I think, however, that the Psalmist means even more than that and, perhaps, still more forcibly, this third thing. “Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity,” that is, falsehood, for that is what he means by vanity, that which seems to be something, but really is nothing. That bubble from the child’s soap and pipe looks as if it were a solid creation of rainbows, but it is gone in almost less time than you can think! And there are many things in the world just like that, especially at this present time. We have new doctrines being preached and new “oligies” being taught which are nothing but lies! There is not as much real substance in them as there is in a soap bubble. When certain false doctrines are being preached, there are some people who are very anxious to know at once what they are. They are curious to see and to know everything! They would be much wiser if they would pray with David, “Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity.”

If you can read a tainted book that denies the Inspiration of the Scriptures and attacks the Truth of God and, if you derive any profit from it, you must be a very different being from myself! I have to read such books. I must read them, sometimes, to know what is said by the enemies of the Gospel, that I may defend the faith and help the weaklings of the flock—but it is a sorry business. When those who are qualified to do so are reading these heretical works, if they are really doing it in the fear of God for the good of their fellow men, they remind me of Sir James Simpson and the two other doctors when they discovered the medical and surgical value of chloroform. They sat at the table, and scarcely knew what was going to happen, but they each took a dose, risking their lives by so doing! And when they came back to consciousness, they had certainly made a great discovery.

But, dear Friends, I do not feel that I am required to take all the drugs and poisons in the world, one after another, just for the sake of testing and trying them that I may come and tell you all about their effects! If I did, probably one of these times I would not come back to you and that would be the end to that business. It is all very well for Sir James Simpson and other eminent physicians and surgeons to make such experiments, for it is part of the duty of their profession, but it is not for the bulk of us to do so. When you go home tonight, I should recommend you to eat for supper those kinds of food which you have been accustomed to eat and which your fathers ate before you, to the building up of the physical frame! And if anybody comes and says to you, “Here is some very wonderful food! There is no telling what effect it will have upon you, it may make you turn into horses.” I do not know why you should not turn into horses if the doctrine of evolution is true—“here is food that is to evolve you into something very marvelous.” But you say to the man, “Keep it yourself, my dear Sir. I would not deprive you of it, for I am not at all ambitious of trying such things.”

I do believe that it is good for a child of God , when he has found honey, to eat it. And if anyone calls out, “Here is something still sweeter,” let him answer, “You may keep it for yourself. I am perfectly satisfied with what I have—honey is sweet enough for me.” If I had gathered manna in the morning in the wilderness and somebody had cried out to me, “Here, I have found a wonderful fungus, a brilliant mushroom, and I am going to make my breakfast of it,” I would have replied, “Well, my Friend, inasmuch as this manna came down from Heaven, it came from the best place I know of. And I feel perfectly satisfied to eat angels’ food. It exactly suits me and it has suited me so long that I will not deprive you of all the mushrooms you can find. So far as I am concerned, you may have your fungi and fatten yourself up on them, or kill yourself with them if you are so insane as to eat them, but they are not fit food for me.”

In just that fashion, dear Friends, my mind is made up about the things of God! And concerning all the poisonous novelties that are introduced so freely nowadays, I pray to the Lord, “Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken me in Your way.”

I am sure also that David had a fourth meaning to the word, vanity, and that it included, not only falsehood, but wickedness in every form. From that, we are to turn even our eyes away. Do you hear that anything is evil? Touch it not, taste it not, handle it not! Look not upon it, keep far away from it. Is there a plague from Hell let loose among the sons of men? My Son, go not near the infected region! If it is the house of the strange woman, or any other haunt of vice, however enchanting the amusement, however alluring the attractions—turn not in that direction—do not even look that way! With Peter, I would cry, “Dearly Beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.” Young man, I pray you, quit the place of danger even though you must leave your garment behind you, as Joseph did— stay not even to see what it is that would fascinate you! One look from the serpent’s eyes may fix you to the spot where you shall be destroyed! Therefore I say to you, as the angels said to Lot, “Escape for your life! Look not behind you, neither stay in all the plain! Escape to the mountain, lest you be consumed.”

What have you and I to do—with such gunpowder hearts as ours— where the sparks of temptation are flying? Let us, if we can, keep wholly clear of the dangers of the present day! If there is but the smell of sin about anything, say at once, “This is not for me. I am a child of God and what another man might do, I could not do, I must not do, I will not do, I scorn to do! My Lord clothed me in the snow-white vestments of a priest unto the Most High God, on that day when He taught me to wash my robes in the blood of the Lamb—and the slightest speck will stain my new garment, which might not show upon another man’s apparel. Therefore, I must not, I dare not go near the mire, but I must stay clear of it and pick my way with care along the King’s Highway.”

Dear Friends, look not towards any sin, for looking breeds longing, and longing begets lusting, and lusting brings sinning! Keep your eyes right and you may keep your heart right. If that first woman had not looked upon the forbidden tree and seen “that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise,” she would not have plucked and eaten of the fruit—and we would not have been the children of sorrow. O Lord, turn away my eyes, for if You will keep my eyes right, then shall I be altogether right. “The light of the body is the eye. If, therefore, your eyes are single, your whole body shall be full of light,” so that, if the eyes are kept right, all is well. O Lord, keep my eyes right! Turn them away from beholding vanity in all these forms—frivolity, carnality, falsehood, wickedness!  
When the Psalmist prayed this prayer, he felt that his eyes were inclined to go this way, otherwise he would not have said, “Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity.” It is much as when a child is having his portrait taken and he is told by the photographer to look in one particular direction, but there is something in the street that amuses him and draws off his gaze that way. The soldiers are passing the window and he looks at them—and you have to fix his little head fast to get him to look the right way. So the Psalmist seems to say, “Lord, make me to look the right way. Do not let me be attracted to look out there to spoil the picture of my life. Turn away my eyes. Hold my head fast and make me look the right way. Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity.”

It was David’s tendency to look that way—is it not also your tendency and mine? Oh, sadly let us confess that we are too much attracted by that which is foolish and vain! I know that I cannot remember good things as well as I can evil things—some abominable saying that I heard as I was passing along in the street will stick by me for years—while many a gracious sentiment is blown away from me by the first breeze that comes! If you do not feel the force of natural depravity in your heart, I think it must be through lack of power or willingness to feel! Alas, we seem to drink up sin readily enough, but we have to, with care, put good and true thoughts into our minds. This river of our life brings down plenty of snags. The old dead trees from the evil country come floating down the stream, but seldom do they bring to our door a log of the cedars of Lebanon. Such good wood is scarce in this river! But its torrent seems to bear along all that is base and vile! We have need to cry much to God, for the set of the current of the old nature is all the wrong way. We find another law in our members warring against the law of our mind and bringing us into captivity to the law of sin and death, so that we have to cry with Paul, “O wretched man that I am!” And with David, “Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity.”

The Psalmist, in the next place, knew the evil of a growing familiarity with vanity. He prayed, “Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity,” because he knew by experience that you cannot go near vanity without being drawn nearer, and then a little nearer, and then a little nearer, still! For the most part, men do not fall into great sin by sudden surprises. It is sometimes so, but usually there are several descending platforms and the descent is made by slow degrees. When King David walked upon the top of his house, that fatal evening, and saw Bathsheba washing herself, if he had been in a right state of heart, as in former times, he would, with all delicacy, have at once retreated from the sight. But he had grown cold and dull in spirit for months—perhaps for years—and that incident was but the match to fire the fuel which had been so long in the drying and which, once kindled, burned to such a fearful conflagration. The sin itself seemed to come upon him all of a sudden, but the preparation for the sin had been in the making long before!

O Friends, if we begin to look upon iniquity, we shall almost certainly fall! There are some sins that we poor, frail creatures cannot endure to look at. We are as moths near a burning candle—the only safety for us is to get out of the room and fly into the open air. But if we stop near the light, we shall certainly burn our wings and, perhaps, even destroy ourselves. So we must take care that we do not get used to sin. I believe that even the common reading in the newspapers of accounts of evil things is defiling to us and if we habitually read such things, we shall come, at last, to think less and less of the coarser forms of vice than we ought to do. It is said that “familiarity breeds contempt.” So it does where heavenly things become familiar to those who have no spiritual perceptions— but it also breeds a hardness of conscience—a sort of hardness where there ought to be delicacy.

I have heard of blind persons, accustomed to read by touch, who have had to sand the tips of their fingers in order to secure sufficient feeling to make out the raised letters. Familiarity with sin covers the fingers of the conscience with a hard skin so that we do not feel as we ought. Do not some of you know, when you began to associate with worldly people— when, for instance, for the first time you went to an evening party—you came home and felt that you could not pray? And you said to yourself, “This will not do. I must keep away from such society in the future. But oh, how shall I get back to my God? I cannot bear to be in this state of heart.” But now, alas, you can go into such company and enjoy it—you are just as worldly as any of them! And yet your condition does not trouble you at all. I spoke with one who used to be a member of this Church—a truly spiritual man he always seemed to me, but he had left to attend another ministry—a ministry, I am afraid, in which there was not much of the savor of Christ. And I said to him, “Well, you like your new minister?” “Yes,” he answered. “And does your soul prosper?” I asked. “My dear Sir,” he replied, “I do not think, for these last three or four years, that I have known whether I had a soul or not.” That is a dreadful state to get into! When this friend first of all united with us in Church fellowship, he would have started back with horror from such a condition!

And you, also, can grow so thoughtless and careless that, at last, you will do things you never would have dreamed of doing before. Therefore, it is good to begin with such a prayer as this, “Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity, lest I look, and looking, I come to look with admiration. And looking further, I come to look with desire. And looking further, still, I look myself into Hell.” Let your prayer begin at the root of the evil and have nothing whatever to do with it. Pluck out your eyes sooner than look at sin, for it were better for you to enter into life blind than that, having two eyes, you should bring yourself into Hell fire by your sin! So says the Savior and He cannot err!

The Psalmist, therefore, would have none of this vanity and nothing whatever to do with it because he could not tell how far he might be drawn if once he began to look upon evil. And observe, too, that he craved Divine help. It shows the pitiful weakness of our nature and the way in which David, an eminent saint, felt that weakness when even he cried to God, “Turn away my eyes.” But man, can you not turn away your own eyes? Of course he can, yet let no man here trust to himself to turn away his own eyes from sin! Let him put the case into higher hands than his own, crying, “Lord, I am so frail, so fallible, so feeble, so liable to fall, that You must be the custodian of my eyes, or else my eyes will be my destruction. Superintend my eyes, Lord! Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity.” I like this prayer of David because it shows his perfect dependence upon his God.

Then observe that he expects God to help him in a particular way. “Turn away my eyes.” He does not say, “Put out my eyes, O Lord!” But he prays, “Let me look another way—a better way.” The way not to be affected by sin is to look at something else. He that will see death and become familiar with the grave will learn to turn his eyes away from vanity. He that will see Heaven and think of its splendors will turn his eyes away from vanity. He that will look at Hell and the place appointed for the wicked will turn away his eyes from vanity.

But, Beloved, there is a better cure than any of these. If you have fixed your eyes on Christ, the Crucified, the risen, the exalted, the soon to come—if your eyes are taken up with Him, you shall find that passage true in many senses—“Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” Salvation from a wandering, frivolous mind is to be found in looking at Christ by holy meditation! Nothing can keep us away from the fangs of error like falling into the embraces of Christ. Looking unto Jesus is the great remedy against looking unto sin! Turn away my eyes from vanity, my Lord, by filling them full with a vision of Yourself and holding me spellbound with that grandest spectacle that eyes of men, or angels, or even of God, Himself, did ever see—the spectacle of God Incarnate bearing our sin in His own body on the Cross! Keep your eyes fixed there and all will be well!

II. So much, then, for David’s prayer for deadness. Now I have less time—as I intended—for the second division of my subject. Having prayed for deadness in one direction, DAVID PRAYS FOR LIFE IN ANOTHER DIRECTION. About 13 years ago I preached from the latter part of this text and the sermon is still extant, so I can be all the briefer now.

(Sermon #1072, Volume 18—My Prayer—read/download the entire sermon for free at  
http://www.spurgeongems.org ). “Quicken me in Your way.” Let us dwell for a little on this prayer of David and try to pray it ourselves.

First, it is clear from this text that the Psalmist was in God’s way. Dear Friend, if you are not in God’s way, may He bring you into it at once! There is but one gate into that way. Over it is inscribed, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” As soon as you do that, you are in the way directly, for He

 is the Way. He says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” The first thing is to get into God’s way—but that is not all.

In the next place, those who are in God’s way are to pray that they may have increasing life while they are in that way. Little can be done in God’s way without life—His way is not a way of death, for, “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” We must be living men, living in God’s way, if we would run in that way! Suppose God’s way to be faith. We must not have a dead faith, otherwise we shall be deceived. The faith which works has life in it—it is that living faith which changes the life and produces good works. Lord, quicken me in my faith! Deliver me, O my God, from having a dead faith in a living Savior! O Lord, give me a living faith that shall operate on my whole life in all respects to Your glory!

There is God’s way of service as well as God’s way of faith and how can we serve the living God with dead works? How can a dead man serve God at all? I am afraid there is a good deal of dead preaching, dead praying, dead praising—and God does not count it as anything at all. It is only the living discourse that comes from the heart and the living Psalm that wells up from a grateful spirit, and the living prayer which comes from a soul that hungers and thirsts after God that He can accept. We must have life if we are to serve God. Quicken me, O Lord, in the way of Your service! You, dear Friend, are going to teach a Sunday school class next Lord’s Day. Pray, “Lord, quicken me to teach the children! Let me do it in a living way.” You, my dear Brother, are going to stand up at the street corner and speak for Christ in the open air. Pray, “Lord, quicken me in bearing living testimony to Your living Truth!” It is all-important not to serve God half-asleep, but it can be done very easily. I believe that if it were proper, I could preach a very dull, sleepy sermon—snore it, in fact— and then I believe that I should set all of you snoring most devoutly all through the place! I have seen the thing done, figuratively, if not literally—the minister asleep, deacons asleep, the members asleep, the hearers asleep—everything done very properly, very regularly, very orderly, never a jar or a jolt, but all sound asleep! God save us from ever coming to that condition! Let the prayer of each of us be, “Quicken me in the way of Your service, O Lord!”

“Quicken me, also, in the way of devotion.” It is a sad thing to try to pray when you feel sleepy in prayer—then is the time to cry, “Lord, help me to pray as if I were carrying the gates of Heaven by storm! Help me to draw near to You with my whole heart and soul. If I am alive at anything, let it be in my devotions. If I am dead anywhere, let it be in the world. But if I am alive anywhere, let it be when I draw near to You, my God!” This ought to be the prayer of each of us, “Quicken me, O Lord, in the way of devotion!” And as to God’s way of holiness, may you and I be made so thoroughly alive in it that we shall do nothing that has not upon it the mark of, “Holiness unto the Lord!”

Yet once more, observe that nobody but God can give us this life in God’s way. All life comes from Him, but especially is this the case with spiritual life. The sculptor can make the marble seem to breathe, but he cannot breathe life into it! And you and I may do and ought to do much for ourselves, but in the matter of real life, that must come from God alone. Let us, then, cry unto Him, “Quicken me in Your way, O Lord!”

Lastly, we often need this quickening. They who were thus quickened yesterday need to be quickened again today! He who burned with zeal a week ago, needs to have fresh oil poured into his lamp continually, else it will soon burn dim. There was never a man, yet, who had such a store of Grace that he could afford to do without constantly resorting to God for more. “Quicken me, quicken me, quicken me,” is the prayer of the soul when it first begins to live! It is the prayer of the Christian when he gets into the stern struggles of life and the poisonous damps of the world! And the prayer of the Christian when he is about to die, is still, “Quicken me, O Lord, quicken me in Your way! O Life of life, be life to me! O Spirit of God, breathe into me power, vigor, force, energy! Give me all these by giving me Yourself to be my life.”

I invite each one of you personally to offer this prayer, “Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken me in Your way.” It is the preacher’s prayer. Let each of us who preach the Gospel ask God to keep the dust out of our eyes and make us full of spiritual life, for, if we are not filled with heavenly life, we shall be a curse to our people instead of a blessing. This prayer is also most suitable for you who are workers for Christ—“Quicken me in Your way.” You know how I sometimes illustrate the truth that hard work cannot be done except by strong people. If we were going to make a railway tunnel through a hill, the contractor would not go to Brampton Hospital and pick out a hundred poor consumptives. Just imagine him trying to do it! He says, “There, my men, are the picks and the spades, go and tunnel through that hill.” Why, they are panting and groaning in the effort to carry the tools! They will never get through that hill—all the picks and all the spades will be of no use to them!

But let the man get a hundred good strong English laborers and they seem to bore a way through the hill while you are talking about it! And, before long, the whole work is done and the train is puffing through the tunnel. So, if you Christian workers keep up to the mark, “strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might,” you will tunnel a way through the mass of London’s sin! But if you are not spiritually strong, what can you do against the enormous evils of London, of England and of the whole world? We shall have to be getting elixirs and tonics to strengthen you and all the time of the Church will be taken up in patting you on the back and trying to comfort you! You had better go back to the hospital and pray, “O Lord, quicken me in Your way!” May God speedily make you stronger! But while you are so weak you cannot do this great work, for it needs those who are spiritually strong to serve the Lord with the utmost vigor.

But if any are sufferers rather than workers, each of them, also, needs to pray this prayer, “O Lord, quicken me in Your way!” You can endure pain, you can bear poverty, you can suffer almost anything when God quickens you in His way. But these burdens grow more heavy when the soul is at a distance from the Lord. Have any of you backslidden? Have you stolen in here after having long wandered away from your Lord? Well, here is a prayer for you, also, “Quicken me in Your way.” Have any of you felt this week that you are getting into the rear rank of the army of life and that your life is ebbing away? Then cry to the Lord, “Quicken me! Quicken me.” “Oh,” says one, “I am full of doubts.” Yes, when you are sick and ill, you begin to doubt. But pray, “Quicken me. Quicken me.”

Perhaps some poor sinner here is saying, “I wish I could be saved.” Well, this text may be a guide to you. Keep far off from everything that is sinful! Get out of the way of Satan! And pray to the Lord, “Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken me in Your way.” Do not come and hear sermons and then go into places of amusement where you forget them—but let each one of us bow before the living Christ and pray, “O Lord Jesus, quicken me by Your blessed Spirit! There is such a thing as spiritual life—breathe it into me. I am a poor dead soul. If I have any life at all, I have only enough life to perceive that I am as one dead—

*‘If aught is felt, ‘tis only pain  
To find I cannot feel.  
Oh make this heart rejoice or ache  
Decide this doubt for me.  
And, if it is not broken, break  
And heal it, if it be.’*

‘Quicken me, O Lord, quicken me!’” And He will do it, for He has declared, “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” May we all come to Him, now, and then shall we all meet in the Glory Land, by-andby, through His Grace! Amen and Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 119:33-40.**

We have here some of the jottings from David’s pocketbook, the notes of his experience as recorded in his diary. The whole Psalm is a great case full of golden rings. They all fit, one into the other, but each ring is also perfect in itself!

Verse 33. Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end. We forget what others teach us, but we never forget what God truly teaches us. He who has been graciously taught will finally persevere.

34. Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your Law; yes, I shall observe it with my whole heart. This is the great point as to thorough godliness—to observe God’s Law with our whole heart. In these days, there is much slurring in religious matters, but they who love God aright love Him with their whole heart and they are careful, even, in what others call, “little things.” Live unto God with the utmost heartiness, exactness and precision every moment! “The Lord your God is a jealous God.” Therefore, serve Him with great jealousy and sincerity of spirit.

35. Make me to go in the path of Your Commandments; for therein do I delight. And when a man delights to do that which is right, God will help him to do it! The Psalmist seems to speak like a little child who has not found the use of his limbs yet. He says, “Make me to go; take hold of me, as a nurse does of her charge, and enable me to take my first trembling, tottering footsteps. Make me to go, for I delight to go. Lord, help me to carry out my soul’s desire.”

36. Incline my heart unto Your testimonies, and not to covetousness. “Make me covetous for holiness! Let that passion which, in other men, goes after gold and silver, in me run after obedience and fellowship with You, my God. Incline my heart in another way than nature would incline it—nature puts it on the left hand and makes me covetous—my God, put my heart on my right side, that I may seek only after You and after holiness.”

37. Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken me in Your way. The Psalmist commends all his nature to the care of his God. Just now he prayed about his feet. Then, about his heart. Now, about his eyes. We need the sanctifying Grace of God in every faculty of our spiritual manhood lest we go astray one way when we are watching against sin in another direction. It matters little at which gate a city is captured, if it is taken at all, it is taken. Oh, for Grace to watch every portal of the town of Mansoul lest we be overcome at any point!

38. Establish Your Word unto Your servant who is devoted to Your fear. “Lord, make Your Word to stand fast to me, for I do love You, I am in Your fear. Your fear has become part of me.” If you notice, the words, “is devoted,” are put in by the translators. The verse should read, “Who to Your fear,” as if his whole self had run into the mold and shape of a Godfearing man. He asks God, therefore, to establish His Word unto him, and so He did. What David asked, David’s God gave.

39. Turn away my reproach which I fear: for Your judgments are good. “Lord, never let me sin so as to bring a reproach upon Your holy name! Keep me from doing anything that would grieve You and cause Your enemies to blaspheme.”

40. Behold, I have longed after Your precepts. That is a sure sign of a true child of God. Hypocrites may long after the promises, but only the true-born child of God longs after the precepts. If your chief desire is to be holy, that is a desire which comes from the Spirit of God. A bad man may desire to go to Heaven. A desperately wicked man may wish to die the death of the righteous. But he who intensely longs to live a godly, righteous life is, indeed, the subject of Divine Grace. I am sure that there are some of us here who can say that we have made no bargains with God, nor put in any conditions whatever—if He will but help us to live holy lives, He may do what He wills with us! Our one desire is this— “Behold, I have longed after Your precepts.”

40. Quicken me in Your righteousness. Let that be the prayer of everyone of us. Amen.  
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VANITY DEPRECATED  
NO. 3026

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 1907.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, A LORD’S-DAY EVENING, IN THE YEAR 1864.

**“Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken me in Your way.” Psalm 119:37.**

THERE are divers kinds of vanity. In the play of the frivolous and the sport of the idle, we see but one sort of vanity—light, open and undisguised. The cap and bells of the fool, the motley of the jester, the mirth of the world, the dance, the lyre and the cup of the dissolute— men know these to be vanities—they wear upon their forefront their proper name and title. Yet another species of vanity, and more deceitful, can be discovered in the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches. A man may follow vanity as truly in the counting-house as in the theater. If he is spending his life in amassing wealth, he is heaping vanity to himself quite as much as though he openly passed his days in vain show or empty pageant. All the fools do not dance or drink. All the fools do not make jests—full many there are of somber mood who spend money for that which is not bread, and their labor for that which satisfies not!

Moreover, there is such a thing as solemn vanity—the vanity that may be seen among those who observe the empty ceremonials of religion, invest themselves with strange garments and affect the odor of sanctity. Or, turning from the gorgeous meetings to the lowly conventicle, vanity may even be discovered beneath the broad brim of the Friend who, seeking after the world rather than after Christ, thinks that he rebukes the world’s vanity when the world may well rebuke his! Vanity, I say, is quite as certainly to be found among the sober as among the frivolous. Unless we follow Christ, and make God the great Object of our life, we only differ from the most frivolous in degree—and possibly the degree may not be as great as we suppose!

You will all understand my text, as you hear it, to mean, first, “Turn away my eyes from looking upon the levities of men, the tomfoolery of the world.” But it means more than this. “Turn away my eyes from looking at the world’s pride, at the world’s wealth, at the world’s substantial temptations.” These, as the royal preacher has said, are vanity. “Vanity of vanities,” said Solomon, “all is vanity,” as he looked at everything beneath the sun! And we may say of everything short of Christ, “Turn away my eyes from beholding it, less my heart should love it.”

The Psalmist goes on to couple with this another petition—“Quicken me in Your way.” Beholding vanity is sure to bring deadness into the soul. You all know that this is true, not only of that which is frothy, but of all that, however specious, is not sterling. If you let the cares of this world enter into your mind too much, do they not destroy your spirituality? If honor is your game, or even if you are hunting after an honest livelihood without casting the care of it upon God, you know that your Grace declines, your faith grows weak and your love becomes ready to expire. No high degree of Divine Grace can be attained when the eyes are fixed upon debasing things. We must have our eyes where we profess that our hearts already are—beyond the skies. We must be looking for Christ to reveal the exceeding riches of His Grace and Glory—not after vanities to display the pleasure of this present evil world—or else our souls will soon lose the force and strength of piety and we shall have good reason to cry, “Quicken me in Your way.”

Beloved, I hope you all know what the Psalmist means by being quickened in God’s way. Often your spirits get lethargic and dull when, suddenly, the Spirit of God comes upon you and once, more your former vigor returns. And, instead of creeping, you begin to run in the way of God’s Commandments. Pray, then, this prayer as well as the former one, “Quicken me in Your way,” for, as the looking at vanity will make us dull, so our souls being quickened will be sure to turn our eyes away from vanity! As the first part of the text acts upon the second, so the second will act also upon the first. Put the two together and may they be graciously fulfilled in the experience of every one of us!

To amplify the teaching of the text, I shall now call your attention to four things—a tacit confession; a silent profession; a vehement desire and a confident hope.

I. First, then, I observe here A TACIT CONFESSION. It is not stated in so many words, but it is really meant.  
The Psalmist seems to impeach himself and unburden his breast before God, deploring, indeed, a natural tendency towards vanity. What? Is it so, after all, that David has known of fellowship with the world? Does the vain still attract him? What? When God’s Covenant has been peculiarly delightful to the shepherd-king, do the mirth and revelry of this world and the gewgaws of earth still attract him? He seems to confess it. He would not need to have his eyes turned off from vanity if there were not a something in his heart that went after it! He would not ask God to turn them off unless he felt that he needed a stronger arm than his own to keep him in fitting restraints! It is very easy for you and me to stand up and play the wise man—yes, and in the closet to pray like wise men. We may feel, in our own souls, that we have experience, now, and shall never again be intoxicated by the world’s draughts, never more be deceived by its lies. But no sooner does Madam Bubble show her face than her strange fascinations draw our eyes! Let the world ring the bell and straightway we start up and our heart wanders, too often before we are aware of it! We know they are vain things—know it thoroughly—but yet, knowing it, we do not in our own nature therefore avoid them! Reckless of the snares, the birds are foolish enough to fly into them! Though we know that the draught is poisoned, yet is it so sweet that unless prevented by God’s Grace, you and I would soon be drunk with it! Every child of God knows that he is a fool or he is a great fool, indeed, if he does not know it! Every heir of Heaven understands that there is within himself a very sink of vanities—his vicious tastes respond to the vile compounds of earth as “deep calls unto deep.” It is clear enough, I think, if you turn over the prayer, that the Psalmist confesses that his heart goes after vanity.  
He confesses, yet again, that his eyes are on it now. He says, “Turn them off.” What does he mean but that they are on it? And some of us, in coming up to the House of God, tonight, and, perhaps, while sitting here, have had to confess that our eyes are on vanity. Why, some of you Believers may have been thinking of some silly snatch of a song that you heard before you were converted, or some idle tale that was told you the other day. You would gladly forget it, but it has followed you in here— yes, and may even follow you to the Communion Table. Or, possibly, your worldly cares have come up with you and my poor talk has scarcely had power to lift you up from your families, from your shops, or from all the anxious thoughts that burden you! Your heart is on these things now. When you stood up to sing about Christ and asked Him to set you as a seal upon His heart, where were your flighty imaginations roaming? We tried to pray just now, but while the preacher’s words went up to Heaven, did not your hearts wander, I know not where?  
The confession assumes another character as it seems to hint that, no sooner are our eyes on vanity, than our heart goes after it. What? Can we not manage our own eyes? What? Are we such vain creatures that the mere sight of vanity is a temptation to us? Surely to see vanity ought to be sufficient to make us avoid it! Some men say that they will look at evil and, knowing that it is evil, they will be safe from the danger of being betrayed by it. Ah, how many have proved the hollowness of that pretense? Brothers and Sisters, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil has brought little benefit to mankind—it has certainly brought a curse! Beware of the hope to be as gods through eating again of that tree! We are more likely to be as devils than to be as gods through feeding upon it! Oh, no! I know enough of sin without looking at it! There is enough knowledge of my sinfulness forced upon me by my daily temptations and failures, without my going to this place or to the other, that I may look upon sin! Do not tell me that you went into bad company just to ascertain its character! Do not tell me, young man, that having heard a certain thing condemned, you thought you ought to see it for yourself! That will not do! That is not a Believer’s desire, nor a godly man’s wish! He cries, “Turn away my eyes. Lord, let me speak to You humbly. Am I so sinful and so weak that I have only to see a ditch to fall into it—only to see a fire to put my finger into it? I am not like that in other things—how is it that I am so besotted in the carnality of my mind? Yet so it is, Lord. You know and Your servant feels that it is so.” Therefore, let the confession stand, “Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity.”

The Psalmist’s confession seems to go a little deeper, for he seems to say that he cannot keep his own eyes off vanity. “Turn away my eyes.” What, Lord? Have I not an optic nerve? Is there not a power in my head to turn which way it wills? Am I compelled to look at vanity? No, not compelled by physical necessity, but still, so compelled by the disposition of this vile nature of mine that unless You keep Your hands on my head and turn my eyes from beholding vanity, I shall surely be looking at it! We will go anywhere to see vanity! It is strange what mountains men will climb—into what depths they will dive—what leagues they will travel— what wealth they will spend to see vanity! And when they have seen all they can see, what does it come to but the sight of so much smoke, after all? And yet, Brothers and Sisters, we cannot keep our eyes off it! If anybody tells you that there is a lewd or unseemly thing, a juggle, or some witchcraft, do you not feel an inward craving, an unholy desire to see it? Is not that a well-known principle of human nature? There is a little tract, I think, entitled, “Don’t Read It”—and why, do you think, was it so entitled? Because, whatever tract might remain unread, that one is certain to be read! “Don’t Read It”—the prohibition provokes appetite, and the moment you and I hear, “don’t,” said, inclination begins to be astir! Thank God that this morbid propensity is restrained and subdued by Sovereign Grace through the love of Jesus! But still, the natural bias is toward evil and only toward evil. Therefore, Lord, “Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity.” The confession goes very deep, you see.  
But there is even more in the next clause. “Quicken me in Your way.” He seems to confess that he is dull, heavy, lumpy, all but dead. Do not you feel the same? I hope you do not, but I often do, and I am afraid you often do, even the best of you. And when we think of how fast our spirits ought to move along the heavenly road, constrained and moved by love like that of Jesus, I think we all must cry—  
*“Dear Lord! And shall we always lie  
At this poor dying rate?  
Our love so faint, so cold to You,  
And Yours to us so great?”*  
Yes, we are dull if God leaves us for a moment—so dull and so doting that the best motives cannot quicken us! Otherwise the Psalmist would not have needed to appeal to the Almighty to effect that of which he was himself capable. What? Will not the thought of Hell quicken me? Can I think of sinners perishing and yet not be awakened? Will not the thought of Heaven quicken me? Can I think of the reward that awaits the righteous and yet be dull and stupid? Will not the thought of death quicken me? Can I think of dying and standing before my God—and yet be slothful in my Master’s service? Will not Christ’s love quicken me? Can I think of His dear wounds, can I sit at the foot of His Cross and think of Him, and yet not be stirred to something like fervency and zeal? Yet it seems that no such consideration can quicken to zeal, but that God Himself must do it or else there had been no need to cry, “Quicken me.” It struck me, as I turned this text over, that it was amazing how poverty-stricken the Psalmist felt himself. What does a beggar ask for? The poorest beggar that I ever met never asked me, so far as I remember, for anything less than a drink of water and a bite of bread—but here is a man who does not ask God for anything so little as that—he asks for life itself! “Quicken me.” The beggar has life—he only asks me for means to sustain it. But here is a poor beggar, knocking at Mercy’s door, who has to ask for life itself! And that beggar represents me—represents you— represents, I am sure, every Christian who knows himself. You may well ask, every day, for spiritual existence! It is not, “Enlarge me, Lord. Enrich me in heavenly things,” but, “Oh, do keep me alive! Quicken me, O Lord!” You see that the confession thus takes us into the most secret places of man’s need. I pray God to teach us all so to feel what our true state is that, with humble, sincere and devout hearts, we may pray the prayer, “Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken me in Your way.”  
II. The text likewise involves A SILENT PROFESSION. Do you observe it? It is not all confession of sin—there is a profession of something.  
There is a profession at least of this, “Lord, I know it is vanity.” That is something. “O my God, how I bless You that I know the hollowness of the world and the plague of my own heart! It was always so, but I did not always think so.” There are some of you who do not think that even worldly amusements are vanity. You love them—there is a sweetness and a substance in them to you. Perhaps you are like the lady who said to the minister that she loved to go to the play, because, first of all, there was the pleasure of thinking of it before she went—and then there was the pleasure of being there, then there was the pleasure of thinking of it afterwards—and the pleasure of telling it to one’s friends. “Ah,” said the man of God, “and there is another pleasure you have forgotten.” “What is that, Sir?” asked the lady. “It is the pleasure of thinking of it on a dying bed, Madam.” Small pleasure that! Some of you have never thought of that last pleasure and, therefore, the world’s vanity is very satisfactory to you. I know what a pig would say if he were to talk. As he munched his husks, he would say, “I cannot tell what to think of those stupid men— they call these husks empty—and throw them away. I think them very luscious and substantial.” You would, then, attribute the quality of the taste to the nature of the beast. It is after the manner of a pig and so, sinners say, “We cannot make out why these strict people, these Puritans, find fault with worldly amusements—we find them very sweet.” Yes, but you see that it is only a sinner who says so—it is only a sinner who feels so. The true child of God knows that both the pleasures of this world and its cares are, alike, vanity!  
I know how some of you have often felt when you were busy. Encumbered with many things, more than you could manage, a friend has complimented you and said, “I am glad you are getting on so well. Appearances bespeak a thriving trade.” “Well,” you reply, “I think I am. I am grateful for business.” But, as your friend turned his head, you thought to yourself, “Ah, but I should be more grateful if I had more Divine Grace, for I feel that much business needs much Grace to balance it, or else the more I get, the poorer I shall be.” You felt that it was vanity unless you could have God’s blessing and the Presence of Christ with it.  
It is a feature of this profession that, seeing this vanity, you do not want to love it and would avoid being ensnared by it. If I say, “Turn away my eyes from it,” I do, in effect, confess before God that I do not love it. I hope there are many of us here who can say, “Lord, our evil heart sometimes goes after it, but we do not really love it—in the bottom of our souls there is a hatred of sin so deeply rooted that if the loss of our eyes would take away temptation and prevent us from sinning, we would thank You to never allow us to see a ray of light, again, for sin is so terrible an evil to us that even blindness would be a blessing if it enabled us to escape from sin.”  
The second clause of the text has in it, likewise, the nature of profession—“Quicken me in Your way.” The man who can pray thus is already in God’s ways! He professes that he loves them—that he desires to be obedient to God’s will and to continue to make greater progress in God’s ways. What do you say, dear Brothers and Sisters? Some of you find the ways of righteousness very rough, yet, would you leave them? Some of you are reproached and persecuted for Christ’s sake, yet, would you like to go back to the ways of sin? The devil has put a horse at your door and there is a golden bridle on it—and it ambles so softly! “Now mount,” he says, “and come back and serve your old master! Nobody will laugh at you then! Everyone will call you a good fellow—charitable, kind and liberal. Come back,” he says, “and I will treat you better than before!” Will you mount and ride? “No,” the very least of us would say if we had the highest offer for the renunciation of Christ—we would not leave Him—  
III. And now, in the third place, there is before us here A VEHEMENT DESIRE—how vehement, those only experience who know the bitterness of vanity and the disappointment which it brings! How vehement those only can describe who know the excellence and sweetness of Divine Quickening! The Psalmist breathes his whole soul out in this prayer. He seems to plead most vehemently, his body and his soul seem to pray together. “Turn away my eyes,” says the body. “Quicken me,” says the soul!  
This is a most reasonable and a most practical desire.  
How reasonable it is! When a Christian is not quickened in God’s way, he is very uncomfortable. The happiest state of a Christian is the holiest state. As there is the most heat nearest the sun, so is there the most happiness nearest to Christ. I am persuaded that no Christian ever finds any comfort when his eyes are fixed on vanity—no, that he never finds any satisfaction unless his soul is quickened in the ways of God. The world may find happiness elsewhere, but he cannot. I do not blame ungodly men for going to their pleasures. Why should I blame them? Let them have their fill—that is all they have to enjoy. I heard of a converted wife who despaired of her husband’s salvation, but she used to be always very kind to him. She said, “I am afraid he will never be converted.” But whatever he wished for, she always got for him, and she would do anything for him, “for,” she said, “I fear that this is the only world in which he will be happy and, therefore, I have made up my mind to make him as happy as I can in it.” But you Christians must seek your delights in a higher sphere because you cannot be happy in the insipid frivolities of the world, or in the sinful enjoyments of it!

Besides being uncomfortable, it is very dangerous. A Christian is always in danger when he is looking after vanity. We heard of a philosopher who looked up to the stars and fell into a pit. But if they fall deeply who look up, how deeply do they fall who look down! No Christian is ever safe when his soul is so slothful or drowsy that it needs quickening. Of course you do not understand me to mean that his soul is in danger of being lost. Every Christian is always safe as to the great matter of his standing in Christ, but he is not safe as regards to his standing and happiness in this life. Satan does not often attack a Christian who is living near to God—at least, I think not. It is when the Christian gets away from God and gets half-starved and begins to feed on vanities, that the devil says, “Now I will have him!” He may sometimes stand foot to foot with the child of God who is active in his Master’s service, but the battle is generally short. He that slips as he goes down into the Valley of Humiliation invites Apollyon to come and fight with him!  
Again, for a Christian to have his eyes fixed on vanity is injurious to his usefulness. No, more—it does positive damage to others. When a Christian is found setting his affection upon worldly things, what do worldlings say? “Why, he is one of our own kith and kin! He is just like us! See, he loves what we love, where is the difference between us and him?” Thus the cause of Christ gets serious injury. How can you, my dear Brother, from the pulpit, for instance, preach concerning a certain sin when you are, yourself, guilty of it? I should like, for instance, to hear a man who swears that Baptism regenerates when he knows it does not, rebuke a countess for saying that she is “not at home” when she is! I should like to hear him rebuke a draper for “a white lie” across the counter. I should like to hear him rebuke the devil, for, I think he could scarcely venture to do it! Unfaithfulness to the Spirit of God is as great a sin as ever Satan committed! No, my Brothers and Sisters, we must keep ourselves clear of these sins, or else, for practical purposes, the tendon of Achilles has been cut and we cannot serve God with might and main! We can only do some trifling service for Him when our garments are spotted and our souls are set on vanity.  
For all these reasons, then, let the Christian pray this reasonable prayer that he may be kept from vanity.  
Did I say that this is a very practical prayer? So, in truth, it is. You will observe that the former pain is practical, though the latter may seem spiritual. The Psalmist says, “Turn away my eyes.” Now, the man who prays after this fashion will not fail in the directness of his aim. He who is diligent in praying this prayer will not be negligent in his life. He will not pray, “Turn away my eyes from vanity,” and then go and drink deathdraughts of carnal pleasures. He will not pray, “Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity,” and then go and turn his eyes on the very evil that he deprecated! No, Brothers and Sisters, there is something so practical in the text that I commend it to your earnest observation. Make it your prayer tonight, each one of you!  
IV. Lastly, there is in the text an expression of CONFIDENT HOPE.  
The Psalmist does not pray like a waverer who will receive nothing of the Lord. It seems to me that he has an unmoved confidence that God will turn his eyes away from vanity and that God can quicken him. Have any of you backslidden? Let this sentence comfort you tonight! Do not lose the belief that Divine Love can restore you. Have you sunk very low? Do not, I pray you, doubt the efficacy of the right hand of the Most High to bring you back again! Satan will get a great advantage over you if you begin to think that God cannot quicken you. No, be assured that He can. And let me tell you that He can do so readily. It may cost you many pains, but it will cost Him none. He the made the world out of nothing can certainly restore to you the joy which you have lost!  
And may I tell you what I think is the means which God often uses with his people to restore and quicken them, and take their eyes from vanity? I think it is a sight of Christ! At any rate, my personal witness is that I never know the vanity of this world so well as when I see the beauties and the perfections of the Lord, my Master. That true man of God, Dr. Hawker—I am told by a friend of mine who visited him one morning—was asked to go and see a military review that was then taking place at Plymouth. The doctor said, “No.” My friend pressed him and said, “I know you are a loyal subject and you like to see your country’s fleets—it is a noble spectacle.” The doctor said, no, he could not go and, being pressed until he was ashamed, he made this remarkable answer, “There are times when I could go and enjoy it, but my eyes have seen the King in His beauty this morning, and I have had so sweet a sense of fellowship with the Lord Jesus that I dare not go to look upon any spectacle lest I should lose the present enjoyment which now engrosses my soul.” I think you and I will have felt the same thing, in our measure, when Christ has manifested Himself to us. What? Look on vanity, my Lord, when Your pierced hand has touched my heart? What are the grandest buildings of this world, with all their pomp of architecture, compared with You, You Great Foundation Stone, you Chief Cornerstone, elect and precious? What is the music of this world, with all its swell and roll, compared with Your name, Immanuel, God With Us?—  
*“Sweeter sounds than music knows  
Charm me in Immanuel’s name—  
All her hopes my spirit owes  
To His birth, and Cross, and shame.”*  
What are the world’s feasts compared with You, O Christ? Its dainties are not sweet, for I have tasted of Your flesh. Its wines are no longer luscious, for I have sipped from the cup of Your blood. What are the world’s choicest offers that she can make me of honor or of wealth? Have You not raised me up and made me to sit together in heavenly places with Yourself, and have You not made me a king and a priest unto God and shall I not reign with You forever and ever? Christian, you may carry on such musing as this by the hour together! You may boast yourself in God and your leviathan faith may swim in this boundless deep of Jesus’ love! You surely, after this, can never wish to go back to the pool wherein the minnow of this world disports itself. Here you can bask yourself in the rays of a meridian sun—and will you afterwards cry for a farthing candle because you have lost its beams?  
Shame on you, Christian, if your soul is taken up with vanities! Let those love them find their all in them, but you cannot! The sight of Him who is white as the lily for perfection and red as the rose for sacrificial suffering must have taken away the beauty of this world for us! Says Rutherford, “Ever since I ate the Bread of Heaven, the brown bread of this world has not been to my palate. And since I have feasted on the food of angels, I cannot eat the ashes that satisfy the men whose portion is in this life.” And truly it is so! Arise, Sun of Righteousness, and our love of darkness shall be dispelled while we are charmed with Your light! We hear of some who worship the sun at its rising—that is sad idolatry— but rise, Sun of Righteousness, and we will worship You and there shall be no idolatry in that! You are not like the sun that burns out human eyes when they look upon it. We will look into Your face until Your transporting light shall only burn out our sight for this world—to help us to gaze upon Yourself without a veil between.  
Oh, that I were talking thus for you all, but I am conscious that I am not. I do pray, however, that you who love vanity may find out how vain it is before you come to die. The other night I lay awake and tossed to and fro many hours before I fell asleep. I realized then, more than at any other time in my life, what it was to die. My every bone seemed to tremble. I lay, as I thought, upon a bed of sickness—the room seemed hushed around me. The ticking of my clock sounded like the ticking of the death-watch. I thought I heard them whisper, “He must die.” And then my soul seemed to fling itself back upon the realities of God in Christ and I asked myself, “Have I preached or have I prayed for this? But now is Christ able to save me. He is my only hope and my only plea. Is it true that Christ came into the world to save sinners?” And I recalled those cogent and blessed arguments which prove that Christ is the Sent One of God and my soul rejoiced that it could die in peace! And then I could but think of that sweet rest which Jesus brings when you can throw yourself on Him.  
And now, tonight, in the recollection of that strange vision of the shadow of death through which I passed, I can but ask others, “What will you do when you really come to die, if you have no Savior?” Men and women, if you have no Christ to trust to, what will you do? You must soon have the death-sweat wiped from your clammy brows. You must soon have the needed drop of water administered to your parched lips. What will you do when Death shakes the bones within the strong man and makes each nerve thrill with the dread music of pain? What will you do when death, and Hell, and judgment, and eternity, and the Great White Throne have become real things to you and your business, and even your children and your wife seem banished from your eyes? Let a brother’s love beseech you to flee from the wrath to come and to fly to Christ for salvation! God knows how I love your soul! It is for the sake of men’s souls that I suffer contempt and scorn and will gladly bear it—yes, and will provoke it more than I have ever done—provoke it because this dull, dead age needs provocation—needs to be stirred up! Even its ministers need to be stirred up to something like honesty and zeal for the souls of men! I say that I will gladly bear reproach for your souls’ sake— will not you?  
Oh, will not you be persuaded to think on those things that make for your eternal peace? The gates of Heaven are up there! The gates of Hell are down yonder! The Cross of Christ points you to Heaven—follow its guidance! Look to the wounds of Jesus! These are the gates of pearl through which you must enter Heaven. But if you will turn to your vanities and to your sins and follow them—and delight yourself in worldly pleasures—then Hell is your portion as surely as you sin! May the Lord give faith to those who have none and help us who have believed through Grace, to walk in His ways—and unto His name shall be the Glory, world without, end! Amen.

*“Go you that boast in all your stores,  
And tell how bright they shine—  
Your heaps of glittering dust are yours, But my Redeemer’s mine!  
I would not change my blest estate  
For all that earth calls good or great!  
And while my faith can keep her hold,  
I envy not the sinner’s gold.”*

No, Lord, I may be weary in Your way, but, by Your Grace I will never weary of Your way.  
EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 119:81-88.**

Verse 81. My soul faints for Your salvation: but I hope in Your word. The Psalmist was so full of longing, hungering, thirsting, for God’s salvation that he had come even to faintness through the strength of his desire. Yet, in his faintness, he was not too far gone to hope—and we, also, have good ground for hoping and believing that God, who gave us His Word, will stand to it, for He is both able and willing to fulfill all that He has promised!

82. My eyes fail from searching Your word, saying, When will You comfort me? He looked out for a message from God as the watchers of the night looked for the breaking of the morning. His eyes ached to behold the comforts of his God. Oh, blessed state of strong desire! I pray God that we may all experience it!

83. For I am become like a bottle in the smoke; yet do I not forget Your statutes. When an empty skin bottle was hung up in one of the smoky dwellings of the East, it became withered, cracked, useless. And the Psalmist says, “‘I am become like a bottle in the smoke,’—I seem to be good for nothing, withered, dried up—‘yet do I not forget Your statutes.’” A good memory is one of the best of things for us to possess, but a good memory for that which is good is better still.

84. How many are the days of Your servant? When will You execute judgment on them that persecute me? “I am not going to live here forever, Lord. Let me not have to wait to be vindicated until I am in my grave. O my God, hasten the day of my deliverance!”

85, 86. The proud have dug pits for me, which are not after Your Law. All Your commandments are faithful: they persecute me wrongfully; help You me. God’s Word is all true—the longer we test and try it, the more shall we find it to be worthy of our fullest confidence. Those who doubt its Truth have never really proved its power. Those who mistrust it in any degree are as yet like inexperienced mariners who are constantly doubting and fearing what is going to happen. But those who have long done business on the great waters of the ocean of Divine Inspiration and who have seen the wonders of the Lord there, will tell you that though Heaven and earth shall pass away, God’s Word shall endure forever! We have seen a thousand things in the course of our earthly pilgrimage, but there is one thing that we have never seen, and that we never shall see, namely, God proving unfaithful to His promise and deserting His people in their time of need!

What a short yet comprehensive prayer the Psalmist prayed when he uttered those three words, “Help You me!” “‘Help You me’—that I may never be frightened by those who wrongfully persecute me—that I may never do anything to deserve their persecution—that I may be able to behave myself wisely while they are plotting against me.” If you are in business, write this prayer on your shops, your offices, and your ledgers! If you are sick, have this petition hanging before your eyes, that you may be constantly reminded to cry to the Lord, “Help You me.”

87. They had almost consumed me upon earth; but I forsook not Your precepts. Therefore his enemies could not consume him. As long as the Believer holds fast to God’s precepts, he is indigestible even to the old dragon, himself! And no adversary shall ever be able to devour him as long as the Word of God is in his heart!

88. Quicken me after Your loving kindness; so shall I keep the testimony of Your mouth. “Give me more true spiritual life, inspirit me, revive me, ‘quicken me.’ At this very moment, good Lord, if I am cold, and half frozen, and almost dead, yet since I am like the trees whose life is in them even when they have lost their leaves, give me a new springtime— ‘Quicken me after Your loving kindness .’” We all need this quickening if we are to hold on and hold out to the end and, blessed be the name of the Lord—

*“New supplies each hour we meet While pressing on to God.”*  
—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #1524 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

YOUR PERSONAL SALVATION  
NO. 1524

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 22, 1880, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls. Of this salvation the Prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the Grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did indicating, when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To whom it was revealed, that not to themselves, but to us they did minister the things which are now reported to you by them that have preached the Gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent down**

**from Heaven—which things angels desire to look into.” 1 Peter 1:9-12.**

**“Let Your mercies come also unto me, O Lord, even Your salvation, according to Your Word.” Psalm 119:41.**

THESE two texts will be, to me, as a bow and a sword—the first for shooting the arrows of the Truth of God and the second for close quarters in dealing with individual consciences. You will see the reason for the pair of texts as we proceed. May the Holy Spirit make use of both according to His own mind. Last Sabbath I preached upon the God of salvation [#1523—The Royal Prerogative]—this morning our principal objective is to speak of that salvation, itself. I then tried to show that God is always the same and that the God of the Old Testament, unto whom belongs the issues, or escapes from death, is still the God of our salvation.

My first text runs upon the same line, for it teaches us that the Prophets of old, who spoke by the power of the Holy Spirit, testified concerning the same salvation which has been reported to us by the Apostles as actually accomplished. There has been no new salvation! There has been a change in the messengers, but they have all spoken of one thing and, though their tidings have been more clearly understood in these latter days, the substance of the good news is still the same. The Old Testament and the New are one, inspired by the same Spirit and filled with the same Subject, namely, the one promised Messiah.

The Prophets foretold what the Apostles reported. The Seers looked forward and the Evangelists look backward—but their eyes meet at one place—they see eye to eye and both behold the Cross. I shall aim, this morning, at commending the salvation of God to those of you who possess it, that you may be the more grateful for your choice inheritance. But I will still more labor to commend it to those who possess it not, that having some idea of the greatness of its value, they may be stirred up to seek it for themselves. Ah, my unsaved Hearers, how great is your loss in missing the salvation of God!

“How shall you escape if you neglect so great a salvation?” O that you might be rescued from such folly! Perhaps God the Holy Spirit will show you the preciousness of this salvation and then you will no longer neglect, despise, or refuse it, but will offer the prayer which I have selected as a sort of second text and entreat the Lord to let His mercies come to you, even His salvation. The prayer may be helpful in enabling you to take with you words and turn to the Lord. God grant it may be so!

I. First, I shall in much simplicity, with a vehement desire for the immediate conviction and salvation of my hearers, try to COMMEND THE SALVATION OF GOD by opening up what Peter has said in the verses before us. Let me urge you to give earnest heed to the salvation of God, because it is a salvation of Grace. The 10th verse says, “Of this salvation the Prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the Grace that would come to you.” Salvation is altogether of Grace—Grace which comes from God in His mercy to man in his helplessness! The Gospel does not come to you asking something of you, but its hands are laden with gifts more precious than gold which it freely bestows upon guilty men. It comes to us, not as a reward for the obedient and deserving, but as a merciful gift for the disobedient and undeserving.

It deals with us, not upon the ground of justice, but upon terms of pure mercy. It asks no price and exacts no purchase. It comes as a benefactor, not as a judge. In the Gospel, God gives liberally and upbraids not. We are accustomed not only to say, “Grace,” but, “Free Grace.” It has been remarked that this is a tautology. So it is, but it is a blessed one, for it makes the meaning doubly clear and leaves no room for mistakes! Since it is evidently objectionable to those who dislike the doctrine intended, it is manifestly forcible and, therefore, we will keep to it. We feel no compunction in ringing such a silver bell twice over—Grace, Free Grace! Lest any should imagine that Grace can be otherwise than free, we shall continue to say, not only Grace, but Free Grace, so long as we preach!

You are lost, my dear Hearer, and God proposes your salvation, but not on any ground of your deserving to be saved, else the proposal would most assuredly fall to the ground in the case of many of you—I might have said in the cases of us all, though some of you think not. The Lord proposes to save you because you are miserable and He is merciful! Because you are needy and He is bountiful. Why, I think every man who hears this good news should open both his ears and lean forward, that he may not lose a word! Yes, and he should open his heart, too, for salvation by Grace is most suitable to all men and they need it greatly.

Only give intimation that goods are to be had free and your shop will be besieged with customers! Those who want us to notice their wares are often crafty enough to put at the head of their advertisement what is not true, “To be given away.” But salvation’s grand advertisement is true— salvation is everything for nothing—pardon free, Christ free, Heaven free! “Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” Our good Physician has none but gratis patients. Since the gifts which the God of All Grace grants to sinful men are beyond all price, He does not barter and dicker with them, but makes His blessings free as air! I am sure that if you feel yourselves to be guilty, the very idea of being saved by Grace will have a charm for you. To a thirsty man, the sound of a rippling stream is music and to a convicted conscience, free pardon is as rivers of water in the wilderness! Oh, that all the world would listen when we have such a message to tell!

Again, your closest attention may well be asked to the salvation of God when you are told in the text that it is by faith. “Receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.” Salvation is not obtained by painful and humiliating penances. Nor by despondency and despair. Nor by any effort, mental or spiritual, involving a purchase by labor and pain. It is entirely and only by faith, or trust, in the Lord Jesus! Do you ask—“Is it really so, that salvation is by believing, simply believing?” Such is the statement of the Word of God! We proclaim it upon the guarantee of Infallible Scripture! “All that believe are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the Law of Moses.” “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.” “He that believes in Him is not condemned.” “He that believes on Him has everlasting life.”

These are a mere handful of proof texts gleaned from wide fields of the same kind. “Repent and believe the Gospel,” is our one plain and simple message. We cry again and again, “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” “Believe only,” and, “Jesus only,” are our two watchwords! Now, it is singularly foolish that men should quibble at this which ought to please them! What? Shall it be that the Gospel shall be regarded as too easy a thing? Will men quarrel with Mercy for being too generous? If there is a condition, is it wisdom on our part to contend with God because that condition seems to be too slight? What would you have for a condition? Would you have it proclaimed that men must be saved by works?

Which among you would, then, be saved? Your works are imperfect and full of evil! The Law cannot justify you, it condemns you! As long as you are under the Law, has not the Holy Spirit declared that you are under the curse? Ought you not, you sons of men, bless God that salvation is of faith that it might be by Grace and that it might be possible to you and sure to all the seed? The sinner cannot keep the Law of God—he has already broken it most terribly and he is, himself, enfeebled and depraved by the Fall. Adam did not stand when he was in his perfection—what shall we do who are ruined by his fall and full of evil?

By the Grace of God the sinner can believe in Jesus! This is ceasing from his own power and merit and leaving himself in his Savior’s hands. Salvation by faith thus sets an open door before those whom the Law shuts out! It is in every way adapted to the case of the guilty and fallen— and such characters should hasten to accept salvation thus presented to them! O my God, how is it that this message does not, at once, awaken all who hear it to an eager acceptance of Your salvation? O that the Spirit of God would make these appeals powerful with you! The Gospel of salvation ought to be regarded by you, for it has engrossed the thoughts of Prophets! The text says, “Of this salvation the Prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the Grace that would come to you.”

Those great men, the choice spirits of the ages which they adorned, were delighted to preach of this salvation as a blessing to be hereafter revealed! They did not, themselves, altogether understand what they were called to reveal, for the Holy Spirit often carried them beyond themselves and made them utter more than they understood. The Inspiration of the Bible is verbal Inspiration. In some cases it must have been only verbal— in every case it must have been mainly so! The human mind is not able to understand and to express all the thoughts of God, they are too sublime and, therefore, God dictated to the Prophets the very language which they should deliver—language of which they, themselves, could not see the farreaching meaning.

They rejoiced in the testimony of the Spirit within them, but they were not free from the necessity to search and to search diligently, if they would, for themselves to derive benefit from the Divine Revelation. I know not how this is, but the fact is clearly stated in the text and must be true. Oh, my Hearers, how diligently you ought to search the Scriptures and listen to the saving Word of God! If men that had the Holy Spirit and were called, “Seers,” nevertheless searched into the meaning of the Word of God which they, themselves, spoke, what ought such poor things as we are to do in order to understand the Gospel?

It should be our delight to read, mark, learn and inwardly digest the Doctrines of Grace. Surely it must be a crime of crimes to be living in utter neglect of a salvation which gained the attentive mind of Daniel and Isaiah and Ezekiel! O that the long list of great and holy men would have some weight with thoughtless ones! I would cause a noble line of Prophets to pass before you this morning that you may see how many of them spoke of Christ and His salvation. From Abel, whose blood cried from the ground, down to him who spoke of the Sun of Righteousness and His Resurrection—they all spoke in Jehovah’s name for your sakes! From Moses down to Malachi, all of these lived and many of them died that they might bear witness to “the Grace that would come to you.”

They, themselves, were, no doubt saved. But still, the full understanding and enjoyment of the Truth was reserved for us! Unto them it was revealed, that not to themselves, but to us, they ministered the things of God! They lighted lamps to shine for future ages! They told of a Christ who was actually to come in later days to work out His Redemption after they had all died in faith without a sight of His actual coming! You and I live in the light of a finished salvation! God has appeared in human flesh! Christ has borne the guilt of man! His Atonement is complete! Jesus has risen from the dead and gone into Glory pleading for Believers!

Surely that which Prophets thought worth their while to study night and day, though they knew that they would never see it, ought to be thought worthy of the devout attention of those immediately concerned in it! If Daniel set his face, by prayer and study—in fasting and in loneliness—to search out the salvation of the future, we ought at once to seek for the salvation which is now present among us! If Isaiah spoke with a golden tongue as the very Chrysostom of the old dispensation; if Jeremiah wept, like a Niobe, rivers of tears; if Ezekiel, despite the splendor of his princely intellect, was almost blinded by the splendor of his visions—if the whole goodly fellowship of the Prophets lived and died to study and to foretell the great salvation—we ought to give most earnest heed to it! If they pointed us to the Lamb of God and, according to the best of their light, foretold the coming of the Redeemer, then woe unto us if we trifle with Heaven’s message and cast its blessings behind our backs! By all the Prophets whom the Lord has sent, I beseech you, give His salvation a hearty welcome and rejoice that you have lived to see it!

Furthermore, when prophecy had ceased, the Holy Spirit came upon another set of men of whom our text speaks. Peter says of these things, that they “are now reported to you by them that have preached the Gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven.” The Apostles followed the Prophets in testifying to this salvation and with the Apostles there was an honorable fellowship of earnest Evangelists and preachers. I will not stay to point out to you the admirable character of these men, but I would beg you to observe that, having personally seen Christ Jesus for themselves, they were not deceived. Many of them had eaten and drank with Him—all the Apostles had done so—they had been with Him in familiar conversation and they were resolute in bearing witness that they had seen Him after He had risen from the dead.

These men spoke with the accent of conviction! If they were duped, there certainly never was another instance of such persons and so many of them being so utterly deluded. They continued throughout all their lives to bear hardships and to endure reproaches for the sake of bearing witness to what they had seen and heard—and all the Apostles but one died a martyr’s death rather than allow the slightest suspicion to be cast upon the truth of their report! The text says that they reported these things when they preached the Gospel by the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven. I see them going everywhere preaching the Word of God!

They were dressed in no robes but those of poverty. They had no distinctions but those of shame and suffering. They had no power but that of the Holy Spirit. I hear them fearlessly lifting up their voices among a warrior population, or gently testifying in peaceful homes. They evangelized the open country and they instructed the capital itself—Caesar’s household hears of them! I see them far away among the Parthians and Scythians telling the barbarians that there is salvation and that Jesus has accomplished it! With equal joy I see them telling cultured Greeks that God was in Christ a Man among men and that the Incarnate God died in man’s place that believing men might be delivered from the wrath of God and from the plague of sin.

These noble bearers of glad tidings continued to report this salvation till they had finished their missions and their lives and, therefore, I feel that for us, in these times, to trifle with God’s Word and give a deaf ear to the invitations of the Gospel is an insult to their honored memories! You martyr them a second time by contemptuously neglecting what they died to hand to you! From the dead they bear witness against you and when they rise again they will sit with their Lord to judge you! Nor have we merely Prophets and Apostles looking on with wonder, but our text says, “Which things angels desire to look into.”

We know very little of these heavenly beings. We do know, however, that they are pure spirits and that the elect angels have not fallen into sin. These beings are not concerned in the Atonement of Christ so far as it is a ransom for sin, seeing as they have never sinned—they may, however, derive some advantage from His death, but of that we cannot now speak particularly. They take such an interest in us, their fellow creatures, that they have an intense wish to know all the mysteries of our salvation. They were pictured, you know, upon the Ark of the Covenant as standing upon the Mercy Seat and looking down upon it with steady gaze. Perhaps Peter was thinking of this holy imagery. They stand intently gazing into the marvel of Propitiation by blood!

Can you quite see the beauty of this spectacle? If we knew that a door was opened in Heaven, would not men be anxious to look in and see Heaven’s wonders? But the case is here reversed, for we see a window opened towards this fallen world and heavenly beings looking down upon the earth, as if Heaven, itself, had no such Object of attraction as Christ and His salvation! Watts sang not amiss when he gave us the verse*—*

*“Archangels leave their high abode  
To learn new mysteries here and toll  
The love of our descending God,  
The glories of Immanuel.”*

Paul tells us that to principalities and powers in the heavenly places shall be made known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God. For men to be lessons to angels, books for seraphs to read, is a strange fact! Perhaps the angelic enquirers ask such questions as this—How is God just and yet the Justifier of the ungodly? At first it must have been, I think, a wonder that He who said, “In the day you eat thereof you shall surely die,” could have permitted man to live on and to have a hope of eternal life.

How could He who says that He will by no means clear the guilty yet bestow His favors upon guilty men? Angels wonder as they see how, through the Substitution of Jesus Christ, God can be sternly just and yet abundantly gracious! And while they learn this, they long to discover more of the Truth of God wrapped up in the one great Sacrifice—they peer and pry and search and consider and, therefore, the doctrines of the Gospel are spoken of as “things which the angels desire to look into.”

Now think—if these glorious spirits who need not to be redeemed— intently gaze upon the Redeemer, should not we, also, desire to look into the mysteries of His death? O men and women, is it nothing to you that the Son of God should give His life as a ransom for many? If these spotless ones marvel at that sacred bath of blood by which sin is washed away, will not you, who are covered with defilement, stop awhile to see the Lord whose flowing veins afford such purging? I think if I saw an angel intently gazing upon any object, if I were a passerby, I should stop and look, too. Have you never noticed in the streets that if one person stands still and looks up, or is occupied with gazing into a shop window, others become curious and also look? I would enlist that faculty of curiosity which is within every man and prompt you to search with the angels as they pry into the underlying meaning of the fact and doctrine of Atonement!

They stand at the foot of the Cross ravished, astounded, yes, all Heaven to this day has never ceased its amazement at the dying Son of God made sin for men! And will none of you spare an hour to look this way and see your best Friend? Shall it be that time out of mind we must come into our pulpits and talk of Christ to deaf ears and speak to our fellow men about the Grace which is brought to them, only to find that they treat it as an old wives’ fable or a story with which they have nothing to do? Ah, my careless Hearer, I wish you were in the same plight as I was in once when I was burdened with a sense of my transgressions. If you felt as I did, you would grab that word, “Grace,” right eagerly and be delighted with the promise made to “faith.”

You would make up your mind that if Prophets searched out salvation; if Apostles reported it; if angels longed to know it, you yourself would find it or perish in searching after it! Do you forget that you must have eternal life or you are undone forever? Do not trifle with your eternal interests! Do not be careless where earth and Heaven are in earnest! Prophets, Apostles, angels all beckon you to seek the Lord! Awake, you that sleep! Arise, O sluggish soul! A thousand voices call you to bestir yourself and receive the Grace which has come to you!

We have already gone a long way with this text, rising step by step. We have stood where angels gaze. Now behold another wonder—we rise beyond them to the angels’ Master. Christ is the substance of this salvation! For what says the text? The Prophets spoke “beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.” Ah, there is the point! To save men Jesus suffered. The Manhood and the Godhead of Christ endured inconceivable anguish! All through His life our Lord was “a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief.” His was the bravest heart that ever lived and the gentlest spirit that ever breathed, but the most crushed and downtrodden! He went from one end of our heavens to the other like a cloud of sympathy, dropping showers of blessing.

All the trials of His people He carried in His heart and all their sins pressed heavily upon His soul—His daily burden of care for all His people was such as none can sympathize with to the fullest, even though like He they have kept the flock of God. I have sometimes had intense sympathy with Moses—I hope I am not egotistical in comparing small things with great—when he cried, “Why have You afflicted Your servant? And why have I not found favor in Your sight, that You lay the burden of all this people upon me? Have I conceived all this people? Have I begotten them, that You should say to me, Carry them in your bosom as a nursing father bears the sucking child, to the land which You swore unto their fathers? I am not able to bear all this people alone because it is too heavy for me.”

But what was the care of the tribes in the wilderness on Moses’ heart compared with the myriads upon myriads that lay upon the heart of Christ, a perpetual burden to His spirit? The sufferings of His life must never be forgotten, but they were consummated by the agonies of His death. There was never such a death! Physically it was equal in pain to the sufferings of any of the martyrs. But its peculiarity of excessive grief did not lie in His bodily sufferings—His soul-sufferings were the soul of His sufferings! Martyrs are sustained by the Presence of their God, but Jesus cried, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” That cry never came up from the stakes of Smithfield, or from the agonies of the Spanish torture chambers, for God was with His witnesses! But He was not with Christ! Here was the depth of His woe!

Now, I pray you, if you will manifest some sign of thought and softness, remember that if the Son of God became a man so that He might suffer to the death for men, it is astonishing that men should turn deaf ears to the salvation which He accomplished! I hear from His Cross His sad complaint, “Is it nothing to you, all you that pass by? Behold and see if there was ever sorrow like My sorrow, which is done to Me.” Oh, if you are born of woman and have a heart that has any flesh about it, think well of the salvation, “the Grace, which is brought unto you,” by the sufferings of the Son of God! One other step remains. It cannot be higher—it is on the same level and I beseech you to stand upon it and think a while, you that have thought so little of yourselves and of your God.

It is this. The Holy Spirit is the witness to all this. It was the Holy Spirit that spoke in the Prophets. It was the Holy Spirit who was with those who reported the Gospel at the first. It is the same Holy Spirit who every day bears witness to Christ. Do you not know that we still have miracles in the Christian Church? Scoffers come to us and say, “Work a miracle and we will believe you.” We work miracles every day! Had you been present at a meeting held here last month you would have heard something not far short of one hundred persons, one after another, assert that by the preaching of the Gospel in this place lately, their lives have been completely changed. In the case of some of these the change is very obvious to all persons acquainted with them.

How was this great change achieved? By the Holy Spirit through the Gospel of your salvation! But I need not quote those special cases. There are many here who would tell you, if this were the time to speak, where they used to spend their Sundays and what was their delight. All things have become new with them. They now seek after holiness as earnestly as they once pursued evil! Though they are not what they want to be, they are not what they used to be. They never thought of purity or goodness, or anything of the kind, but they loved the wages of unrighteousness and now they loathe the things they once loved! I have seen moral miracles quite as marvelous in their line as the healing of a leper or the raising of the dead! This is the witness of the Holy Spirit which He continues to bear in the Church and, by that witness I entreat you to stop and think of the blessed salvation which can work the same miracle in you.

From the first day in which man fell—when the Holy Spirit, at the gates of Eden presented the Gospel in the first promise—all down the prophetic ages and then by Christ and by His Apostles and onward by all the men whom God has sent, since, to speak with power, the Holy Spirit entreats you to consider Christ and His salvation! To this end He convinces the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment to come—that men may turn unto the salvation of God and live forever! By the Spirit of the living God I entreat you, dear Hearers, to neglect no longer the great salvation which has won the admiration of all holy beings and has the seal of the Triune God upon its forefront!

II. So far I have commended my Lord’s salvation and now I would desire you, with all this in your minds, to turn to the prayer in the 119th Psalm—“Let Your mercies come also unto me, O Lord, even Your salvation, according to Your Word.” Use the prayer with this intent—Lord, I have been hearing what Prophets and Apostles and angels think of Your salvation. What Your Son and what Your Spirit think of it. Now let me humbly say what I think of it—Oh that it were mine! Oh that it would come to me! This, then, is my second head. I would RECOMMEND THE PRAYER OF THE PSALMIST.

I will say about it, first, that it is, in itself, a very gracious prayer, for it is offered on right grounds. “Let Your mercies come also unto me.” There is no mention of merit or desert. His entreaty is only for mercy. He pleads guilty and throws himself upon the prerogative of the King who can pardon offenders. Are you willing, my dear Hearer, you who have never sought the Savior—are you willing at this moment to stand on that ground and to ask for salvation as the result of mercy? You shall have it on such terms, but you can never be saved until you will acknowledge that you are guilty and submit to Justice.

Observe the plural, “Let your mercies come unto me,” as if David felt that he needed a double share of it, yes, a sevenfold measure of it! Elsewhere he cried, “According unto the multitude of Your tender mercies blot out my transgressions.” Our sense of sin leads us to use similar language. Lord, I need much mercy, manifold mercy, multiplied mercy! I need mercy upon mercy! I need forgiving mercy! I need regenerating mercy! I need mercy for the present as well as for the past and I shall need mercy to keep me in the future if I am to be saved at all! Friend, set your plea on that ground! Multiplied sins crave multiplied mercies. “Let Your mercies come also unto me, O Lord.”

It is a gracious prayer, because it asks for the right thing—“Your salvation”—not a salvation of my own invention, but, “Your salvation.” God’s salvation is one in which His Divine Sovereignty is revealed and that Sovereignty must be accepted and adored. Do not dispute against God’s salvation, but accept it in its entirety, just as it is revealed. Receive the salvation which the Lord planned in eternity—which He worked out on Calvary and which He applies to the heart by the Holy Spirit. You need salvation from sinning as well as salvation from Hell and the Lord will give you that. You need salvation from self to God and that, too, He will bestow. Ask for all that the Lord intends by His salvation and includes in it. “Let Your mercies come also unto me, even Your salvation.”

You see, dear Brothers and Sisters, that the prayer is put in the right form, for it is added, “Even Your salvation according to Your Word.” He wishes to be saved in the manner which the Lord has appointed. Dear Hearer, where are you? Are you hidden away in the foggy corners? I wish I could get a hold of your hand and speak as a Brother to you. You do not want God to go out of the way of His Word to save you, do you? You are willing to be saved in the Scriptural way, the Biblical way! People nowadays will do anything but keep to the Word of God! They will follow any book but the Bible! Now, pray the Lord to give you the salvation of the Bible in the Bible’s own way.

Lord, if Your Word says I must repent, give me Your salvation and cause me to repent! If Your Word says that I must confess my sin, give me Your salvation in the confession of sin! If You say I must trust Christ, Lord, help me, now, to trust Him—only grant me Your salvation according to Your Word. Observe that the whole prayer is conceived and uttered in a humble spirit. It is, “Let Your salvation come also unto me.” He admits his helplessness. He cannot get at the mercy! He needs it to come to him. He is so wounded and so sick that he cannot put on the plaster nor reach the medicine and, therefore, he seeks the Lord to bring it to him.

He is like the man half dead on the road to Jericho and needs that someone should pour on the oil and wine, for he cannot help himself by reason of his spiritual lethargy and death. “Let Your mercies come to me, O Lord.” This implies that there is a barrier between him and the mercy. The road appears to be blocked up. The devil intervenes and his fears hedge up the way and he cries to God to clear the road. “Lord, let Your mercies come! Did you not say, Let there be light and there was light? So let Your mercy come to me, a poor dying sinner and I shall have it, Lord! But it must come to me by Your power. Lo, here I lie at Hell’s dark door and feel within my spirit as if the sentence of condemnation were registered in Heaven against me! But let Your mercies come also unto me, O God, even Your salvation, according to Your Word.” That is a very gracious prayer.

In the second place this prayer may be supported by gracious arguments. May the Spirit of God help you to plead them. I will suppose some poor heart painfully longing to use this prayer. Here are arguments for you. Pray like this. Say, “ Lord, let Your mercy come to me, for I need mercy.” Do not go on the tack of trying to show that you are good, because mercy will then pass you by. To argue merit is to plead against yourself! Whenever you say, “Lord, I am as good as other people. I try to do my best,” and so on, you act as foolishly as if a beggar at your door should plead that he was not very badly off, not half so needy as others and neither scantily fed nor badly clothed. This would be a new method of begging and a very bad one!

No, no! State your case in all its terrible truthfulness. Say, “O Lord, I feel that nobody in all this world needs Your mercy more than I do! Let my need plead with You! Give me Your salvation. I am no impostor, I am a sinner—let Your mercy and Your Truth visit me in very deed.” Your soul’s wounds are not such as sham beggars make with chemicals—they are real sores—plead them with the God of all Grace! Your poverty is not that which wears rags abroad and fine linen at home—you are utterly bankrupt and this you may urge before the Lord as a reason for His mercy.

Next plead this—“Lord, You know and You have made me to know somewhat of what will become of me if Your mercy does not come to me—I must perish, I must perish miserably! I have heard the Gospel and have neglected it. I have been a Sabbath-breaker, even when I thought I was a Sabbath-keeper. I have been a despiser of Christ, even when I stood up and sang His praises, for I sang them with a hypocrite’s lips. The hottest place in Hell will surely be mine unless Your mercy comes to me. Oh, send that mercy, now.” This is good and prevalent pleading—hold on to it.

Then plead, “If Your mercy shall come to me, it will be a great wonder, Lord. I have not the confidence to do more than faintly hope it may come, but, oh, if You ever do blot out my sins I will tell the world of it! I will tell the angels of it! Through eternity I will sing Your praises and claim to be, of all the saved ones, the most remarkable instance of what Your Sovereign Grace can do! Do you feel like that, dear Hearer? I used to think if the Lord saved me He would have begun on a new line altogether—that His mercy would have sent up her song an octave higher than before! In every man’s case there will be a conviction that there is a something so special about his guilt that there will be something very special about the mercy which can put that guilt away.

Plead, then, the peril of your soul and the Glory which Grace will gain by your rescue. Plead the greatness of the Grace needed, for Christ delights to do great marvels and His name is Wonderful. “Lord, pardon my iniquity, for it is great. Lord, save me, for I am a nobody and it will be a wonder, indeed, if Your Grace shall visit me.” Then you can put this to the good Savior. Tell Him if He will give you His salvation, He will not be impoverished by the gift. “Lord, I am a thirsty soul, but You are such a River that if I drink from You there will be no fear of my exhausting Your boundless supply.” They put up over certain little nasty, dirty ponds by the roadside, “No dogs may be washed here.” Pity the dogs if they were!

But no one puts up such a notice on the banks of great, glorious Old Father Thames! You may wash your dogs if you like and his flood will flow on! There is too much of it to be so readily polluted. So is it with the boundless mercy of God! God permits many a poor dog of a sinner to be washed in it and yet it is just as full and efficacious as ever! You need not be afraid of enjoying too much sunlight, for the sun loses nothing by your basking in his beams. So is it with Divine Mercy—it can visit you and bless you and remain as great and glorious as ever! Out of the fullness of Christ millions may still receive salvation and He will remain the same overflowing Fountain of Grace! Plead, then, “Lord, if such a poor soul as I shall be saved, I shall be made supremely happy, but none of Your attributes or glories shall be one jot the less illustrious! You will be as great and blessed a God as ever.”

You may even say, “Lord, now that Your Son Jesus has died, it will not dishonor You to save me. Before the atoning Sacrifice it might have stained Your Justice to pass by sin, but now that the Sacrifice is offered, You can be just and yet the Justifier. Lord, none shall say You are unjust if You save even

 me now that Jesus Christ has bled. Since You have made my salvation possible without infringement of Your Law, I beseech You fulfill the design of the great Sacrifice and save even me!” There is another plea implied in the prayer and a very sweet argument it is—“Let Your mercies come also unto me, O Lord.” It means—“It has come to so many before, therefore let it also come unto me. Lord, if I were the only one and You had never saved a sinner before, yet would I venture upon Your Word and promise! Especially would I come and trust the blood of Jesus! But, Lord, I am not the first by many millions. I beseech You, then, of Your great love, let Your salvation come unto me.”

You notice in the parable of the prodigal that the forlorn feeder of swine was the only son that had gone astray and consequently the first that ever tried whether his father would receive him. The elder brother had not gone astray and was there at home to grumble at his younger brother. But the poor prodigal son, though he had no instance before him of his father’s willingness to forgive, was bold to try, by faith, his father’s heart! None had trod that way before, yet he made bold to explore it! He felt that he should not be cast out. But when we hear any of you say, “I will arise and go to my Father,” scores of us are ready to leap out of our seats and cry, “Come along, Brother, for we have come and the gracious Father has received us!”

I do not know whether the elder brother is here to murmur at a penitent sinner. I am happy to say I have none of his spirit. It will make my heart happy! The bells of my whole nature will ring for joy if I may only bring one of my poor, prodigal brothers back to my great Father’s house! Oh, come along with you and let this be the plea—“You have received so many, O receive me!” Cry, “Bless me, even me, also, O my Father!” The Lord has not come to the end of His mercy. Jesus has not come to the end of His saving work. There is room for you and there will be room for thousands upon thousands until the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door. He has not risen up, nor closed the door as yet and still His mercy cries, “Come to Me! Come to Me! Come to Me and he that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.”

I will close by assuring you that this blessedly gracious prayer which I have helped to back up with arguments will be answered by our gracious God. Oh, be sure of this! He never sent His Prophets to preach to us a salvation which cannot be ours! He never sent His Apostles to report to us concerning a mere dream! He never set the angels wondering at an empty speculation! He never gave His Son to be a Ransom which will not redeem and He never committed His Spirit to witness to that which will, after all, mock the sinner’s need! No, He is able to save—there is salvation—there is salvation to be had, to be had now, even now!

We are sitting in the light in this house while a dense fog causes darkness all around, even darkness which may be felt. This is an emblem of the state of those who are in Christ—they have light in their hearts, light in their habitations, light in Jesus Christ! O come to Him and find salvation now! May God bring any that have been in darkness into His marvelous light and bring them now and unto His name shall be praise forever and ever! Amen and amen.

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PLEADING PRAYER  
NO. 1969

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

**“Remember the Word unto Your servant upon which You have caused me to hope.”  
Psalm 119:49.**

THE 119th Psalm is a very wonderful composition. Its expressions are many as the waves, but its testimony is one as the sea. It deals all along with the same subject and it consists, as you observe, of a vast number of verses, some of which are very similar to others. And yet throughout the 176 stanzas, the same thought is not repeated—there is always a shade of difference even when the color of the thought appears to be the same. Some have said that in it there is an absence of variety, but that is merely the observation of those who have not studied it. I have weighed each word and looked at each syllable with lengthened meditation—and I bear witness that this sacred song has no tautology in it, but is charmingly varied from beginning to end! Its variety is that of a kaleidoscope—from a few objects, a boundless variation is produced. In the kaleidoscope you look once and there is a strangely beautiful form. You shift the glass a very little and another shape, equally delicate and beautiful, is before your eyes. So it is here. What you see is the same and yet never the same—it is the same Truth of God, but it is always placed in a new light, put in a new connection, or in some way or other invested with freshness!

I do not believe that any other subject but a heavenly one would have allowed of such a Psalm being written upon it, for the things of this world are soon spun out. Neither could such a handling have been given to the subject by any mind less than Divine—Inspiration, alone, can account for the fullness and freshness of this Psalm.

The best compositions of men are soon exhausted. They are cisterns and not springing fountains. You enjoy them very much at the first acquaintance and you think you could hear them a hundred times over, but you could not—you soon find them wearisome. Very speedily a man eats too much honey. Even children, at last, are cloyed with sweets. All human books grow stale after a time—but with the Word of God the desire to know increases and the more you know of it the less you think you know! The Book grows upon you. As you dive into its depths, you have a growing perception of the infinity which remains unexplored. You are still sighing to know more of that which it is your bliss to know.

This wonderful Psalm, from its great length, helps us to wonder at the immensity of Scripture. From its keeping to one subject it helps us to adore the unity of Scripture, for it is but one. Yet, from the many turns it gives to the same thought, it helps you to see the variety of Scripture. How manifold are the words and thoughts of God! In His Word, just as in creation, the wonders of His skill are manifold, indeed.

I very greatly admire in this Psalm the singular amalgam that we have of testimony, of prayer and of praise. In one verse the Psalmist bears witness. In a second verse he praises. In a third verse he prays. It is an incense made up of many spices, but they are wonderfully compounded and worked together so as to form one perfect sweetness. You would not like to have one-third of the Psalm composed of prayer—marked up to the 60th verse, for instance, and then another part made up exclusively of praise and yet a third portion of unmixed testimony. It is best to have all these Divinely-sweet ingredients intermixed and worked into a sacred unity, as you have them in this thrice-hallowed Psalm. My text is a prayer, but there is testimony in it and there is a measure of praise in it, too. In this single text there is the same mixing up of sweet perfumes as there is in the whole Psalm! May God give us Grace to be in such a state of heart that we may enter into the prayer of the text! Wherein it bears grateful testimony, may we be able to join in that testimony! Wherein it praises God, may we also extol Him with all our hearts!

There are only two things that I can attempt to speak about at this time. I cannot bring forth from so rich a casket all its treasures. The first is, the prayer—“Remember the Word unto Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope.” And, secondly, the plea of the prayer. It is a three-fold plea, as I think—it is Your word, I am Your servant and You have caused me to hope in it. Come, Holy Spirit and bless our meditation!

I. First, then, THE PRAYER. David prays, “Remember the Word unto Your servant.”  
“Remember.” That prayer is spoken after the manner of men, for God cannot forget. It would be a very low conception of His Omniscience if we imagined that anything passed away from His knowledge. We see things as they come one after the other in a procession, but God is in a position from which He sees all at once. A man traveling through England sees a portion at a time, but he that looks at a map sees the whole country present before him then and there. God sees everything as now. Nothing is past, nothing is future to Him. He sees things that are not as though they were and the things that shall be as though they had been! God does not forget and, therefore, the text speaks only in a certain restricted sense and must be understood after the manner of men. Beloved, after what other manner could we speak? God has not taught us to speak after the manner of God! How could we? We are not Divine. There is a language above which Paul heard, of which he said that it was not lawful for a man to utter. Men must speak after the manner of men—and each sort of a man must speak after his own manner.  
Do not, therefore, let us censure a young Brother when he utters a prayer which is very natural from him, though it sounds strange to us. Let us not condemn him because his language is not strictly accurate, for though it may jar upon our ears, the Lord may be well pleased with it. You are intelligent, educated and a full-grown Christian—and the childish language of a beginner may jar upon your ears—but you must bear the jarring, for the Lord bears much more from you and others of His children. If the language is natural to the new convert and flows from his heart, he speaks after the manner and according to the manner of men, which manner is always faulty. You do no better if judged from God’s point of view. We are far too apt to make men offenders for words. Certainly God might make the best of His servants offenders for the best of their words if He pleased.  
In such a case as this He might have caught up His servant David, and said sharply, “Remember? Do you say

 ‘Remember’ to Me? Do you imagine that I can forget? And do you take it upon yourself to speak unto the eternal God and say to Him, ‘Remember’?” Yet there is no fault found with that prayer. On the contrary, it is a prayer that the Holy Spirit, Himself, inspired and the Holy Spirit has recorded it and put it in this Psalm as a pattern, that we may pray after the same fashion. I guarantee you that if our prayers were gauged according to the standard of language which is used by angels before the eternal Throne of God, they would seem very, very poor things, full of faulty expressions. But God does not measure them so, for though we speak after the manner of men, it is much to our comfort that God loves the manner of men, for it is the manner of His Only-Begotten Son! It is thus that Jesus spoke and the Lord, in our feeble tones, which in themselves might be open to censure, hears the language of the Son of Man and for His dear sake He does not condemn our speaking after the manner of men.  
He permits us so to speak, for He, Himself, knows how to read between the lines. He takes the meaning of our groans and tears—and when we fail to express ourselves suitably in words—He reads our hearts and accepts our secret meanings. I think I am warranted in making these remarks upon this expression of the prayer, “Remember the Word unto Your servant,” and I hope they will furnish comfort to those of you who have very slender gifts of utterance when you approach the Mercy Seat.  
I do not, however, conceal from myself the fact that it is language which has some trace of unbelief in it. Perhaps no unbelief was in the Psalmist’s heart at the time, but it is language fit for the lips of one who has not always been at all times a firm and unstaggering Believer. It looks as if the thought that the Lord might forget had crossed the pleader’s soul. It looks as if, even though it had not been tolerated—for faith had cast it out—yet the suggestion had knocked at the door of the mind, saying, “My way is hid from the Lord and my judgment is passed over from my God.” We do not say to another person, “Remember,” unless there is at least the apprehension of the possibility of forgetfulness. David could not quite mean, when he came to think it over, that he really thought that God would forget, but we usually speak in haste when we speak in unbelief—and then we do not measure what we say.  
Unbelief is the hurry of the soul. A regenerate soul sitting still and correctly weighing the whole question between the eternal faithfulness of God and the passing troubles of life, cannot be long in coming to a confident conclusion. There is a hurry about our cares and anxieties—and in our hurry we are apt to rush to the foolish conclusion that the Lord may forget us. O poor worried child, if you are so foolish as to allow so absurd a fear to enter your bosom, your Father would sooner that you should express your apprehension to Him than hide it in your heart! A smothered fire is always dangerous. Rake it out! If you have the suspicion that you may be forgotten, pray right honestly, “Remember the Word unto Your servant.” These prayers are placed in Scripture on purpose that they may be expressions of what we are half afraid to express. The dread is really there and God sees it—and He tutors us to give it vent. With groans that cannot be uttered, His Spirit helps us! But sometimes He helps us another way, namely, by helping us to utter those groans. He encourages us to express what at first we dared not utter. So we are helped to say, “Remember the Word,” though we blush to think that it ever should have occurred to us that God could forget!  
Let us look at the prayer again—“Remember the Word unto Your servant.” The intention of him who prayed this prayer was to ask God to remember His Word by fulfilling it. That is the real meaning of it, as when a servant sometimes says, “I hope you will remember me.” Yes, we will remember him, but that is not quite what he means. Those who speak thus hope that we will give them some token of remembrance—some practical proof that we remember them! So does this prayer mean, “Lord, let me not only be in Your thoughts, but let me be in Your acts! You have promised to supply my needs; remember me by supplying my needs. You have promised to forgive my sin; remember me by giving me a sense of pardon. You have promised to help Your servant and give me strength according to my day—remember Your Word by fulfilling Your Word and granting strength to me according as I have need of it.”  
Now, Beloved, this is very legitimate praying. In fact, it is the very essence of prayer to put God in mind of what He has promised. You can never pray an inch beyond the tether of the promise with any assurance of being heard. For my own part, I always feel on sure ground with God when I can quote His own Words. I feel, then, that I may ask boldly and I need not put in, “If it is Your will,” and those other reservations, because if His promise were not His will, He would not have spoken it. There is the promise in His Word and I know that He put it there as the index of what He intended to give and to do—and as an invitation to His child to plead with Him about those very things which He has so indicated and say to Him—“Now, Lord, do as You have said.” Therefore I follow the line the Lord has marked out for me and I expect Him to do as He has said.  
It is a grand thing, when you are pleading with any man, to bring his own handwriting before him. You have, then, a hold upon him of the firmest kind. You have his promise in black and white and he cannot run back from that. The intent of God in giving us the promise, as it were, in black and white, in His own handwriting, is that He may be enquired of by us to do those very things which He has engaged Himself to do. Ungodly men cannot make out what prayer is. “Do you suppose,” they say, “that you can change the will of God?” We reply to them—We never supposed anything of the kind, but we suppose that our prayer is the shadow of a coming blessing. As “coming events cast their shadows before them,” so, when God is about to bless us, He moves us to pray for that very blessing! If it were possible to shut out the man’s shadow, we could not expect the man to enter! And if it were possible to shut out prayer from our soul, we should feel, at the same time, that we had shut out the blessing.  
Our Lord is pleased to duplicate His mercies. The blessing itself is great, but it is an equal blessing to be made to pray for it! It frequently does a child more good to get a favor from his father than the favor itself brings him. If the father sets him some little task to do, if he says, “Now, my child, prove to me that this will be a good thing,” the mental exercise, the pleading, the asking may be as useful in the child’s education as the thing for which he asks. I say, again, our God doubles His blessings by making His servants pray for them! Prayer, then, is nothing more than this—my believingly remembering that God has promised a certain blessing and then my reminding Him that He has promised it. It is not supposable that He will forget, but He would have me act towards Him as if He might forget in order that by such an exercise I, myself, may come to value the blessing and may be stirred up to importunity and fervor. The prayer is a right one when we say, “Remember the Word unto Your servant.” It is, in fact, what God always intends prayer to be—a reminding our heavenly Father of His promises.  
Sometimes this word, “remember,” is very fitly used, because it seems to the mind that God is likely to remember something else which would be to our loss. Suppose you and I have been walking contrary to God—and sometimes His people do walk contrary to Him—then the Lord may remember our sins and He may begin to deal with us in a way of chastisement and lay us very low. Then is the time to come in with this prayer— “Remember the Word unto Your servant.”  
It is as much as to say, “Albeit that my sins clamor in Your ears and cry out that You should smite me, yet remember Your Word of promise, of pardon, of pity, of power—and let me live. I admit, my gracious Lord, that if You do listen to the voice of my actions, they proclaim me to be most ungrateful. If You do listen to my feebleness in prayer, it will accuse me of lack of earnestness and, therefore, You may be inclined to deny it to me. All my forgetfulnesses, shortcomings and transgressions cry out against me—if You hear these, my Lord, You may well reach for the rod and smite me again and again, but oh, be deaf to these voices and hear only the music of Your own Word!—  
*‘Not my sins, O Lord, remember,  
Not Your own avenger be!  
But, for Your great tender mercies, Savior, God, remember me!’*

Remember the Word, and forget my words. Remember the Word whereon You have caused me to hope and forget the things wherein I have caused You to be angry. I know You might well remember my sins, as You did the sins of Israel in the wilderness, and say, ‘They shall not enter into My rest,’ but I beseech You, do not! You might hear my provocations and my unbeliefs and say, ‘You shall die in the wilderness,’ but, O my God, as Moses pleaded Your Covenant with You, so do I plead with You, not for my sake, but for Your Word’s sake! Not for my sake, but for Your promise’ sake, and Your Covenant’s sake! I beseech You, fail not Your servant, but bear with me, still, till You shall bring me into the rest which You have promised me.”

You see, then, the singular appropriateness of the expression, though at first it might seem to be a questionable one. “Remember the Word unto Your servant.” Brothers and Sisters, the great mercy to us is that God has a very strong memory. Towards His people He has a memory so strong that He has said, “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget; yet will I not forget you.” What a strong memory that is which is stronger than the memory of a mother towards the babe at her breast! Oh, blessed memory of God! “Yet will I not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you,” He says, “upon the palms of My hands.” There is no forgetting a thing that is written on the palms of your hands! You cannot do any work but you see it there! And God cannot do any work without seeing His children’s names. He can do no work of judgment without seeing their names and, therefore, He spares His people. He can do no work of bounty but what their names are on His hands and, therefore, He says, “Surely, blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.” His hands are branded with the names of His beloved and it is not possible that He can forget them! The Lord has a loving memory. He cannot forget His own. Think of Words like these—“I remember you, the love of your espousals.” “O Israel, you shall not be forgotten of Me.” “The Lord your God will not forsake you, nor forget the Covenant of your fathers which He swore unto them.”

And then, our God has a long memory. How many ages was it before Christ came and yet His coming was always on the Lord’s mind! The fullness of time had not yet arrived and yet the Lord did not forget it, for no sooner did the clock strike than that very night—they did not wait till the morning—a multitude of the heavenly host recognized the sign and their praise flowed forth in a cataract of delightful song which filled the midnight air! They sang, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” Christ was born at the very moment when God decreed that He should be born. The weeks were ended, the dispensation closed and lo, He came! God has a very exact and punctual memory. Remember when Israel came out of Egypt—“the same day” did the Lord lead them forth! The Lord glories in the exactness of the hour. I know some persons who would never leave a bill unpaid for a day and, as for their rent, they are ready before twelve o’clock strikes and they say, “My landlord has never had to wait. I was always at the door to the very moment.” You shall find that God, though He never is before His time, yet never is too late. He has a very exact memory—a memory about little things and about moments of time—and He keeps touch with His servants even to the jots and tittles of the Word which He has given.

He has, Beloved, a very gracious memory towards His people because it is strong in certain matters, but in love He makes it very weak in other points. He says, “Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” He has forgotten their transgressions and cast all their sins into the depths of the sea! All the strength of the Lord’s memory that might have gone in the direction of noting our evil deeds runs the other way! He is all the more powerful to remember us for good because He will never remember our evil as long as He lives. Beloved, the Lord thinks upon you to do you good. Speaking after the manner of men, He schemes, plots and plans to do His people good! He says that He will bless us with His whole heart and with His whole soul. That is a wonderful expression! Let me give you the precise text, “Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with My whole heart and with my whole soul.” Think of God blessing His people with His whole heart, rejoicing over them to do them good! “The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous” and the heart of the Lord is occupied with the cases of His own people. Blessed be His dear name, we have very much to appeal to when we pray, “Remember the Word unto Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope.”

II. The time flies too quickly and, therefore, let me mention, in the second place, THE PLEAS WHICH THE PALMIST USES. The first is, “Remember the Word.” It is a blessed plea—the Word—for by the Word upon which God had caused His servant to hope is meant God’s Word. He never makes His people to hope in anybody else’s word. It is in the Lord’s Word that the hope of His people finds support. Let us consider the power, the dignity, the glory of that Word. This is the greatest of all grounds of assurance!

I have already said that you cannot have a greater hold upon a man than when you have his own word to plead. “Remember the Word.” God is Sovereign. He has the right to do absolutely as He wills. “Who shall stay His hand, or say unto Him, What are You doing?” But God—let us speak with reverence—when He gives a promise, binds Himself with cords of His own making. He binds Himself down to such and such a course when He says that such and such a thing shall be. Therefore, when you grasp the promise, you get a hold on God. Wondrous fact! Marvelous that we should be able, as it were, to move the arm that moves the stars and to hold the King who holds the waters in the hollow of His hand! If You have His promise for it, God must give you the blessing—God can sooner cease to be than cease to be true. “He is not a man, that He should lie, neither the son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and shall He not do it?”

There is nothing on earth, there is nothing in Heaven half so steadfast as the simple, naked Word of God. How mighty is this plea, when you present before the Lord His own sacred Word! It is a royal Word. We do not expect kings to play fast and loose with words. They say, “If honor were banished from all the rest of mankind, it ought still to find a refuge in the breast of kings.” But what shall I say of, “the King eternal, immortal, invisible”? Will He lie? Do You suspect the one “Blessed and only Potentate,” the King of Kings and Lord of Lords? How you insult His Majesty if you dream that He can falsify His solemn pledge and break His Word! “Where the word of a king is, there is power,” because there is faithfulness at the back of it.

But it is more than a royal Word, Brothers and Sisters. It is an irrevocable Word. Man has to eat his words, sometimes, and unsay his say. He would perform his engagement, but he cannot. It is not that he is unfaithful, but that he is unable. Now this is never so with God. His Word never returns to Him void. Go, find the snowflakes winging their way like white doves back to Heaven! Go, find the drops of rain rising upward like diamonds flung up from the hand of a mighty man to find a lodging place in the cloud from which they fell! Until the snow and the rain return to Heaven and mock the ground which they promised to bless, the Word of God shall never return to Him void! What He has promised shall be and what He has revealed shall surely be accomplished, for be sure of this— God has never spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth, so as to revoke a single Word which He has spoken aforetime. He has never disannulled one of His ordinances, or cancelled one of His promises. The everlasting decree stands firm as the Throne of Jehovah and the promise is as unfailing as the decree.

Not only is it an irrevocable Word, but it is an almighty Word. Recollect, Brethren, that by the Word of God were the heavens made and all the hosts of them! And it is by His Word that all things consist. You and I are most foolish when we want something more to rest upon than the Word of God. My great trouble in battling with anxious enquirers is that they demand needless evidences and cry out for marks and tokens. And I have to put it to them very plainly—“Then I suppose God is a liar and you will not believe Him unless He brings evidence to support His Word. You are obliged to run out of doors to find proof of what He says and you will not believe it unless you get that proof.” It is too much so with us. I tell you, Sirs, that the bare Word of God is better than all the proofs, evidences, signs and marks that could be heaped together throughout eternity! And what is more, I will say that if all the marks, tokens, signs, evidences, promises and oaths of men all said, “No”—if God says, “Yes,” His, “Yes,” surpasses all the “Noes” and all the other denials that could possibly be gathered together!

Our faith ought to give God credit for this, for the Lord God cannot be otherwise than true—we must not suppose such a thing! Unlimited faith is no more than God deserves. He cannot err or fail. “The heavens are not clean in His sight and His angels He charged with folly.” And He charged them with it not without reason, for all things compared with Him are folly and the greatest of intellects are but fools compared with God! With Him there cannot possibly be a failure or a falsehood! Oh, that we had power to grasp His Word as it ought to be grasped! Our hope lies there.

Are you hungry tonight? Has it even come to this? And have you God’s promise that you shall be fed? Then you shall be fed! You shall be fed. The devil comes to you and he says, “Yes, you may be fed, but you must do a wrong action in order to get the food.” He speaks to the Son of God, again, and he says, “Command that these stones be made bread.” Listen not to him, but believe God! Now is your time to glorify God. A faith that can believe over a hungry belly is faith, indeed! Yet it is only such a faith as is due to God. God will abundantly justify all the trust we repose in Him. Tell the devil, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” There is nutriment in God’s Word! There is everything in that Word of God! The creature owes its power to bless and nourish to the will of God. And if the creature is absent, the will of God can still achieve its purpose by His Word without the creature! I put this in a very strong light, but I am certain that I go no further than God’s Word will warrant. Oh for Grace to plead the promise and to rest upon it!

Beloved, when you are praying in time of trouble, what a blessed plea for you, “Lord, remember the Word! You have said in Your Word, ‘When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you.”’ He will remember it! You may forget the Word of the Lord, but He does not—and when you plead it, the answer of peace shall come to your soul—“I do earnestly remember you still.” Though the Lord chastens you, yet He does not forget you. His chastisement is proof that He thinks of you. He will not set you as Admah, nor make you as Zeboim, for everlasting love cannot forget the objects of its choice. He chooses us for His love and loves us for His choice. Therefore, plead well His Word.

The second plea lies in the words, “Your servant.” “Remember the Word unto Your servant.” A man is bound to keep his word to anybody and everybody, but sometimes there may be special persons with whom a failure world be peculiarly dishonorable. Among the rest, a man must be true to his servant.

Notice, first, “Remember the Word unto Your servant,” means this, “Lord, it is Your Grace that has made me Your servant. I was once an outcast. I was once Your enemy. Lord, I did not come to You, but You did come to me. I did not seek employment at Your hands—I was too wicked for that, but You did seek me. It was Your Grace that made me Your servant. Now, Lord, have You brought me to be Your servant to put me to shame? You have done the greater thing for me, will You not do the less? To take me into Your service was great condescension on Your part—will You not grant me my rations? Will You not find me my livery? Will You not be gracious to me?” This is good pleading, is it not?

Again, here is a further plea. A servant has a claim upon his master. We dare say it very reverently, that we have a claim upon God when we are His servants. Of course, that claim is only such as He allows and it is founded alone on Grace. But still it is a strong plea with our gracious Master. He was thought to be an evil man who left his servant to perish when he was sick. He could do no more work and so his cruel owner left him by the way to die. No good master would do that. Lord, will You do that with me? When I grow sick, will You forsake me? When I grow old, will You desert me? When I cannot speak in Your name any longer, will You disown me? When I cannot stand any longer by reason of feebleness, will You throw me on one side? When I lie gasping upon my death bed, will You say, “I have had his best days, but I will leave him now”? The supposition would be blasphemous! It cannot be. O my Brothers and Sisters, our God will not leave us! When the old man’s heart cries, “O God, You have taught me from my youth and, up to now I have declared Your wondrous works! Now, also, when I am old and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not.” The Lord answers, “Even to your old age I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.” Our heavenly Lord is not like that Amalekite master who left his Egyptian servant in the field because he was ill. Let us not imagine such a thing!

There is this further plea. If a man sets his servants such and such a work to do, is he not bound to find them the means of doing it? Only a cruel task-master compels men to make bricks and gives them no straw to mingle with the clay. We are not dealing with Pharaoh, remember—we are dealing with Jehovah who acts on quite another principle. Beloved, the Lord never sent any one of His soldiers to warfare at His own charges. How frequently, when my Master sends me to the front, I have to cry to Him, “Lord, grant me fresh supplies! Lord, send on the ammunition! I must have powder. I must have funds and Grace and guidance! Lord, send fresh men! Fill up the ranks as one after another falls on the field!”

I find Him always ready with His reinforcements and His succors and His stores. There is no failure of commissariat with God. He takes good care of His fighting servants, His suffering servants, His plowing servants and His sowing servants—and so you would expect Him to do. A good master will not set his servant a hard task beyond his strength and then refuse to lift a hand to help him. That would be far from the God of infinite mercy. Now, dear Sister, you that have begun to teach in the Sunday school and feel that you are hardly equal to it, the Lord will help you. Go on. Do not give up. You that have been trying to preach in the villages, but who do not see any good coming of it and are half inclined to run away, stand to your guns. Cry to the Lord for more strength and He will help you. And let this be the plea, “Lord, remember the Word unto Your servant, for I am Your servant, Lord. I desire to be wholly Yours. I give myself to You—body, soul and spirit. And my cry is, ‘Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.’ I am Your servant. My ear is bored to the doorpost and I would never quit Your service, or labor for another.”

You remember what the old man-servant said, in the olden time, when his master angrily said, “We must part, John.” “I hope not, Sir. Where are you going?” The servant had no intention to go anywhere! “Ah,” said his master, “I do not intend to employ you any longer.” The old servant is said to have answered, “Sir, if you have not a good servant, I know that I have a good master, and I do not mean to leave him. I cannot think of going away.” It is a grand thing to feel that you are not going away from God— that you have such a good Master that you are going to cling to the posts of His door—and if He puts You out by the front door, You mean to come in at the back! Let the Lord do what He pleases, I am forever bound to belong to Him, only! Brother, resolve that if you cannot preach for your Lord, you will hear for Him! And if You cannot be a leader of the Church, you will be a follower, somewhere, but you will serve your Lord forever. This, then, is one of the pleas. “Remember the Word unto Your servant.”

The last plea I shall offer but a few words upon. “Upon which You have caused me to hope.” Lord, I have been hoping on Your Word and I have acted upon that hope. I believe the Word to be true and I have pledged the truth of it. That is good pleading. A man has given me a bill—not a transaction I ever have anything to do with—but suppose such a thing. Suppose I go and discount it. I say, “My Friend, you must honor that bill because I have received the cash for it. Do not fail to meet it.” It is as if we said to our God—“Lord, You have caused me to hope upon this promise of Yours. I have been raising present comfort upon the credit of it. I felt so sure that it would be fulfilled that I have taken it into the market and I have been living upon its proceeds by hoping on it.” See how David went and discounted the promissory note—he encouraged himself by it. Turn to the verses which follow my text and you will see. “This is my comfort in my affliction: for Your Word has quickened me.” He had been comforting himself by the promise. And if the promise failed, that comfort would turn out to be a sheer delusion. Will the Lord delude those who trust Him?

Read the next verse—“The proud have had me greatly in derision: yet have I not declined from Your Law.” I stuck to Your doctrine, Your precept, Your promise. I declared Your Word to be true—will You not keep it and so vindicate my confident assurance? “I remembered Your judgments of old, O Lord; and have comforted myself.” I have thus already derived strength and establishment out of Your promises. Will You allow the enemy to tell me that I have deceived myself? Will You revoke Your declarations? It cannot be! What is more, “Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.” I have been singing Your promise over and over. I feel so sure of it that, before it has been fulfilled, I have been singing about it! Lord, shall I be made a fool of by having sung for nothing?

Again, “I have remembered Your name, O Lord, in the night, and have kept Your Law.” I rose in the night to bless You for Your promises. I sat up in my bed and clapped my hands with delight because You have given this promise and laid it home to my heart. Shall it not come true? Ah, Beloved! You may rest assured of this—Your faith never went beyond the goodness of Your God and it never will! If You believe great things of Him, He will do greater things than You believe! He will do exceeding abundantly above what You ask, or even think!

This is wonderfully blessed pleading. “You have caused me to hope; therefore, O Lord, remember Your Word!” When I read how God kept His promise to His people of old, I said, “He will keep it to me.” And when I remembered how He had kept other promises to me in past times, I said, “He will keep this, also.” His former dealings have induced us to trust in Him. If He had not been so gracious to us on former occasions, we would never have expected to be heard this time. But His love in times past compels us to trust Him now. “Lord, You have caused me to hope: my hope is of Your creating, nourishing and perfecting. I am justified in hoping in You on this occasion from what You have done for me in days gone by. This hope of mine is the work of Your Holy Spirit in my soul. Can Your Holy Spirit make a poor soul hope for that which He will never receive? Can Your Holy Spirit tantalize me by exciting a hope which is never to be fulfilled? You have caused me to hope. It was Your Word and I was Your servant, and I believe Your Word, and Your Spirit helped me to go from faith to hope! And now, when the windows of hope are opened, will You not be pleased to send in a messenger of Grace and peace?” O needy child of God, go home and plead in this fashion and you shall not return empty!

Have you come into a position from which there seems to be no escape? Do not ask to escape, but cry, “Remember the Word unto Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope.”

You, poor sinner over yonder, that has never found Christ, think of this gracious Word, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Lay hold on that loving declaration and hope in it! And then say, “Lord, remember the Word unto Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope.” The Lord bless you all and give you a joyful hope in His sure promise, for His name’s sake! Amen and amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 119:49-64.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—191, 193, 733.  
Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1872 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

MY COMFORT IN AFFLICTION

NO. 1872

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON JULY 7, 1881.

**“This is my comfort in my affliction, for Your Word has quickened me.” Psalm 119:50.**

IT is almost needless for me to say that, in some respects, the same events happen unto all men alike—in the matter of afflictions it is certainly so. None of us can expect to escape trial. If you are ungodly, “many sorrows shall be to the wicked.” If you are godly, “many are the afflictions of the righteous.” If you walk in the ways of holiness, you shall find that there are stumbling blocks cast in the way by the enemy. If you walk in the ways of unrighteousness, you shall be taken in snares and held there even unto death. There is no escaping trouble! We are born to it as the sparks fly upward. When we are born the second time, though we inherit innumerable mercies, we are certainly born to another set of troubles, for we enter upon spiritual trials, spiritual conflicts, spiritual pains and so forth—and thus we get a double set of distresses, as well as twofold mercies.

He who wrote this 119th Psalm was a good man, but assuredly he was an afflicted man. Many times did David sorrow and sorrow sorely. The man after God’s own heart was one who felt God’s own hand in chastisement. David was a king and, therefore, it would be folly on our part to suppose that men who are wealthier and greater than we are, are more screened from affliction—it is quite the reverse. The higher up the mountain, the more boisterous the winds. Depend upon it, that the middle state for which Agur prayed, “Give me neither poverty nor riches,” is, upon the whole, the best! Greatness, prominence, popularity, nobility, royalty bring no relief from trial, but rather an increase of it. Nobody who consulted his own comfort would enter upon dignities attended with so much labor and sore travail. Child of God, remember that neither goodness nor greatness can deliver you from affliction! You have to face it, whatever your position in life—therefore face it with dauntless courage and extort victory from it.

Yet, even if you do face it, you will not escape it. Even if you cry to God to help you, He will help you through the trouble, but He will probably not turn it aside from you. He will deliver you from evil, but He may yet lead you into trial. He has promised that He will deliver you in six troubles and that in seven there shall no evil touch you, but He does not promise that either six or seven trials shall be kept from you. One like unto the Son of God was with the three holy children in the fire, but He was not with them till they were in the fire—at least not visibly—and He was not so with them as either to quench the flame, or to prevent their being cast into it. “I am with you, Israel, passing through the fire,” may well describe the Covenant assurance.

May we realize the fire if only thus we can realize the Divine Presence! Gladly may we accept the furnace if we may but find the company of the Son of God with us there. Every child of God among you can, with the Psalmist, speak of my affliction. You may not be able to speak of my estate, my heritage, my wealth, my health—but you can all speak of my affliction. No man is a monopolist of misery. A portion of the black draught of sorrow is left for others. Of that cup we must all drink, little or much, and we must drink of it as God ordains. So far, then, one event happens to all.

My objective at this time is to show the difference between the Christian and the worldling in his affliction. First, Believers have in their affliction a peculiar comfort—“This is my comfort in my affliction.” Secondly, that comfort comes from a peculiar source—“For Your Word has quickened me.” And, thirdly, that peculiar comfort is valuable under very special trials such as are mentioned in the context.

I. First, then, Believers have their PECULIAR COMFORT under affliction. “This,” says David, “is my comfort in my affliction.” “This”—dwell on the word, “this,” as different from the consolations of other men. The drunk takes his cup and he quotes Solomon, “Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that are of heavy hearts.” And, as he quaffs his cup, he says, “This is my comfort in my affliction.” The miser hides his gold, takes down his purse, and chinks it. Oh, the music of those golden notes! And he cries, “This is my comfort in my affliction.” Men mostly have some comfort or other. Some have allowable comforts, though they are but of minor quality. They find comfort in the sympathy of men, in domestic kindness, in philosophic reflection, in homely content—but such comforts generally fail—always fail when the trial becomes exceedingly severe.

Now, just as the wicked man and the worldly man can say of this or that, “This is my comfort,” the Christian comes forward and, bringing with him the Word of God brimming with rich promises, he says, “This is my comfort in my affliction.” You put down your comfort and I put down mine. “This is my comfort”—he is evidently not ashamed of it. He is evidently ready to set forth his solace in preference to all others. And while others say, I derive consolation from this, and I from that, David opens the Holy Scripture and cheerfully exclaims, “This is my comfort.” Can you say the same? “This” in opposition to everything else—this promise of God, this Covenant of His Grace—“This is my comfort.”

Now read, “ this” in another sense, as indicating that he knew what it was. “This is my comfort.” He can explain what it is. Many Christian people get a comfort out of God’s Word, out of believing in Christ and out of religious exercises, but they can hardly tell what the comfort is. A rose smells sweetly to a man who does not know the name of the rose. A rosegrower tells me, “This is the Marshal Niel.” Thank you, dear Sir, but I do not know who Marshal Niel is, or was or why the flower bears his name. But I can smell the rose all the same. So, many people cannot explain doctrines, but they enjoy them. After all, experience is better than exposition. Yet it is a splendid thing when the two go together, so that the Believer can say to his friend, “Listen, I will tell you, ‘This is my comfort.’”

“I saw how happy you were, dear Friend, when you were in trouble. I saw you sick the other day and I noticed your patience. I knew you to be slandered and I saw how calm you were. Can you tell me why you were so calm and self-contained?” It is a very happy thing if the Christian can turn round and answer such a question fully. I like to see him ready to give a reason for the hope that is in him with meekness and fear, saying— “This is my comfort in my affliction.” I want you, if you have enjoyed comfort from God, to get it packed up in such a form that you can pass it on to a friend! Get it explained to your own understanding so that you can tell others what it is, so that they may taste the consolation with which God has comforted you. Be ready to explain to young beginners—“This is my comfort in my affliction.”

Again, “ this” is used in another sense, that is, as having the thing near at hand. I do not like speaking of my comfort from God and saying, that is my comfort, that is the solace which I enjoyed long ago. Oh, no, no! You need a comfort that you can press to your bosom, and say, “This is my comfort,” this which I have here at this present time! “This” is the word which indicates nearness. “This is my comfort.” Do you enjoy it now? You were so happy once. Are you as happy now?—

*“What peaceful hours I once enjoyed!  
How sweet their memory still!”*  
Yes, that is very well, Cowper, but it would be better to sing—  
*“What peaceful hours I now enjoy!*

*How sweet the present hour”?*  
“This is my comfort.” I still have it with me—as my affliction is present with me, so my consolation is present with me!

You have heard, the classic story of the Rhodian who said that at such and such a place he had made a jump of many yards. He bragged till a Greek, who stood by, chalked out the distance and said, “Would you mind jumping half that length now?” So I have heard people talk of what enjoyments they once had, what delights they once had. I have heard of a man who has the roots of depravity dug out of him and, as for sin, he has almost forgotten what it is! I would like to watch that brother when under the influence of rheumatism. I do not want him to have it long, but I should like him to have a twinge or two, that I might see whether some roots of corruption do not remain. I think that when he was tried in that way, or if not just in that way, in some other, he would find that there was a rootlet or two still in the soil. If a storm were to come on, perhaps our brave dry-land sailor might not find his anchor quite so easy to cast overboard as he now thinks it is. You smile at the talk of modern perfectionism and so do I, but I am sick of it! I do not believe in it. It is so utterly contrary to that which I have to learn every day, of my own unworthiness, that I feel a contempt for it. Do have your comforts always handy—pray God that that which was a consolation years ago may still be a consolation, so that you may say, “This is my comfort in my affliction.”

Again, I think the word, “this,” is meant as pleading it in prayer. Let me read the previous verse, “Remember the Word unto Your servant upon which You have caused me to hope.” That is Your promise which you have made me to hope upon, Lord—fulfill it to me—for this, Your promise, is my comfort in my affliction and I plead it in prayer! Suppose, Brothers and Sisters, you and I are enabled to take comfort out of a promise. We have, in that fact, a good argument to plead with God. We may say, “Lord, I have so believed this promise of Yours that I have been persuaded that I had in my possession the blessing promised to me. And now, shall I be ashamed by this, my hope? Will You not honor Your Word, seeing You have caused me to rest upon it?” Is not this good pleading? “Remember Your Word unto Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope, for this is already my comfort. And You will have given me a false comfort and led me into error if Your Word should fail. O my Lord, since I have sucked my comfort out of the expectation of what You are about to do, surely by this You are pledged and bound to Your servant—that You will keep Your Word!” Hence the word “this” is seen to be a very comprehensive word. May the Spirit of God teach each of us to say of our priceless Bible, “This is my comfort in my affliction.”

II. We pass on to note, secondly, that this comfort comes from A PECULIAR SOURCE—“This is my comfort, for Your Word has quickened me.” The comfort, then, is partly outward, coming from God’s Word, but it is mainly and pre-eminently inward, for it is God’s Word experienced as to its quickening power within the soul.

First, it is God’s Word that comforts. Why do we look anywhere else for consolation but to God’s Word? Oh, Brothers and Sisters, I am ashamed to have to say it, but we go to our neighbors, or relatives and we cry, “Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O my friends!” and it ends with our crying, “Miserable comforters are you all!” We turn to the pages of our past life and look

 there for comfort, but this may also fail us. Though experience is a legitimate source of comfort, yet when the sky is dark and lowering, experience is apt to minister fresh distress! If we were to go at once to God’s Word and search it till we found a promise suitable to our case, we should find relief far sooner. All cisterns dry up—only the fountain remains. Next time you are troubled, reach down to the Bible. Say to your soul, “Soul, sit still and hear what God the Lord will speak, for He will speak peace unto His people.”

You read one promise, and you feel, “No, that hardly meets the case. Here is another, but it is made to a special character and I am afraid I am not that character. Here, thank God, is one that just fits me, as a key fits the wards of a lock.” When you find such a promise, use it at once. John Bunyan beautifully pictures a pilgrim laid by the heels in Giant Despair’s castle and there beaten with a crab tree cudgel till one morning he puts his hand into his bosom and cries to his brother, Christian, “What a fool have I been to lie rotting in this noisome dungeon, when all this time I have a key in my bosom which will open every door in Doubting Castle!” “Say you so, my Brother,” says Christian, “pluck it out, and let us use it at once!” This key, which is called Promise, is thrust into the first lock and the door flies open! And then it is tried upon the next and the next with quick results. Though the great iron gate had a rusted lock in which the key did terribly grate and grind, yet it did open and the prisoners were free from the vile durance of their mistrust! The Promise has always opened the gate and every gate—yes, the gates of despair shall be opened with that key called Promise, if a man does but know how to hold it firmly and turn it wisely till the bolt flies back.

“This is my comfort in my affliction,” says the Psalmist—God’s own Word. Dear Friends, fly to this comfort with speed in every time of trouble—get to be familiar with God’s Word so that you may do so. I have found it helpful to carry “Clarke’s Precious Promises” in my pocket, so as to refer to it in the hour of trial. If you go into the market and are likely to do a ready-money business, you always take a checkbook with you. So carry precious promises with you, that you may plead the Word of God which suits your case. I have turned to promises for the sick when I have been of that number, or to promises to the poor, the despondent, the weary and such like, according to my own condition, and I have always found a Scripture fitted to my case. I do not need a promise made to the sick when I am perfectly well. I do not need balm for a broken heart when my soul is rejoicing in the Lord—but it is very handy to know where to lay your hands upon suitable Words of cheer when necessity arises. Thus the external comfort of the Christian is the Word of God.

Now for the internal part of his consolation. “This is my comfort in my affliction, for Your Word has quickened me.” Oh, it is not the letter, but the Spirit which is our real comfort! We look not to that Book which consists of so much binding, so much paper and so much ink, but to the living Witness within the Book! The Holy Spirit embodies Himself in these blessed Words of God and works upon our hearts so that we are quickened by the Word! It is this which is the true comfort of the soul.

When you read the promise and it is applied with power to you. When you read the Law and it works with force upon your conscience. When you read any part of God’s Word and it gives life to your spirit—then it is that you get the comfort of it! I have heard of persons reading so many chapters a day and getting through the Bible in a year—a very admirable habit, no doubt—but it may be performed so mechanically that no good, whatever, may come of it. You need to pray earnestly over the Word, that it may quicken you, or otherwise it will not be a comfort to you. Let us think of what our comfort is in the time of affliction from our soul’s being quickened by the Lord. Comfort comes thus—God’s Word has, in past days, quickened us. It has been a Word of Life from the dead. In our affliction we, therefore, remember how God has brought us out of spiritual death and made us alive—and this cheers us. If you can say, “Whatever pain I suffer, whatever grief I endure, yet I am a living child of God,” then you have a wellspring of comfort! It is better to be the most afflicted child of God than to be the happy worldling. Better be God’s dog than the devil’s darling. Child of God, comfort yourself with this—if God has not given me a soft bed, nor left me a whole skin, yet He has quickened me by His Word and this is a choice favor. Thus our first quickening from spiritual death is a sunny memory.

After we are made alive we need to be quickened in duty, to be quickened in joy, to be quickened in every holy exercise and we are happy if the Word has given us this repeated quickening. If, in looking back, dear Friend, you can say, “Your Word has quickened me. I have had much joy in hearing Your Word. I have been made full of energy through Your Word. I have been made to run in the way of Your Commandments through Your Word”—all this will be a great comfort to you. You can then plead—“O Lord, while You may have denied me much of the joy that some people have, yet You have often quickened me. Oh, be it so again, for this is my comfort!” I hope I am speaking to many experienced Christians who can say that God’s Word has very frequently refreshed them when they have been in the depths of distress and fetched them up from the gates of the grave. And if they can bear this testimony, they know what comfort there is in the quickening of the Word of God and they will ask to feel that quickening influence, again, so they may be of good comfort.

Brothers and Sisters, it is a very strange thing that when God wills to do one thing, He often does another. When He wants to comfort us, what does He do? Does He comfort us? Yes, and no. He quickens us and so He comforts us. Sometimes the roundabout way is the straight way. God does not give the comfort we ask for by a distinct act, but He quickens us and so we obtain comfort. Here is a person very low and depressed. What does a wise doctor do? He does not give strong drink to act as a temporary stimulus to his spirits, for this would end in a reaction in which the man would sink lower. No, he gives him a tonic and braces him up. And when the man is stronger, he becomes happier and shakes off his nervousness. The Lord comforts His servants by quickening them—“This is my comfort in my affliction, for Your Word has quickened me.”

I speak to some of you who have endured long affliction and it is a joy to see you out, again, tonight. Has not God’s Word often quickened you in affliction? Perhaps you have been sluggish when in health, but affliction has made you feel the value of the promise, the value of the Covenant blessing—and then you have cried to God for it. You may have been worried about worldly cares, but you have been obliged to drop them in the time of affliction and your only care has been to get nearer to Christ and to creep into your Lord’s bosom!

Sometimes in prosperity you could hardly pray, but I guarantee you, you prayed when you were ready to perish and pined at death’s door! Your affliction quickened your prayers. There is a man trying to write with a quill pen—it will not make anything but a thick stroke—so he takes a knife and cuts fiercely at the quill till it marks admirably. So we have to be cut with the sharp knife of affliction, for only then can the Lord make use of us! See how sharply gardeners trim their vines. They take off every shoot till the vine looks like a dry stick. There will be no grapes in the spring if there is not this cutting away in the autumn and winter! God quickens us in our afflictions through His Word. Our sorrows are made to have a salutary action on our souls. We receive by them spiritual revival and health and, therefore, comfort flows in to us. It would not be wise to pray to be altogether delivered from trial, though we should like to be. It would be a pleasant thing to have a grassy path all the way to Heaven and never to find a stone in the road—but though pleasant, it might not be safe. If the way were a fine turf cut every morning with a lawnmower and made as soft as velvet, I am afraid we should never get to Heaven at all, for we should linger too long upon the road!

Some animals’ feet are not adapted for smooth places and, Brothers and Sisters, you and I are of a very slippery-footed race! We slip when the roads are smooth! It is easy to go down hill, but it is not easy to do so without a stumble. John Bunyan tells us that when Christian passed through the Valley of Humiliation, the fight he had there with Apollyon was very much due to the slips he made in going down the hill which descended into the valley. Happy is he who is in the Valley of Humiliation, for, “He that is down need fear no fall.” But his happiness will largely depend upon how he came down. Gently, you that are on the hilltops of delight and prosperity. Gently, lest, perhaps you slip with your feet and mischief come of it! Quickening is what we need and if we get it, even if it comes to us by the sharpest tribulation, we may gladly accept it. “This is my comfort in my affliction, for Your Word has quickened me.”

III. Lastly, and very briefly, there are certain PECULIAR TRIALS of Christians in which this peculiar comfort is specially excellent.  
Kindly look at the Psalm and notice, in the 49th verse, that the Psalmist suffered from hope deferred. “Remember Your Word unto Your servant, upon which You have caused me to hope.” Long waiting for the promise to be fulfilled may make the soul grow weary—and hope deferred makes the heart sick. At such a time this is to be our comfort—“Your Word has quickened me.” I have not yet obtained that which I prayed for, but I have been quickened while I have been praying. I have not found the blessing I have been seeking, but I am sure I shall have it, for already the exercise of prayer has been of service to me—

this is my comfort under the delay of my hope, that Your Word has already quickened me!  
Notice the next verse, in which the Psalmist was suffering the great trial of scorn. “The proud have had me greatly in derision.” Ridicule is a very sharp ordeal. When the proud are able to say something against us that stings—when they laugh, yes, and laugh greatly, and treat us like the mire in the streets—it is a severe affliction and under it we need rich comfort. If at that time we feel that if man’s word stings, yet God’s Word quickens, then we are comforted! If we are driven more to God by being scorned by men, we may very cheerfully accept their contempt and say, “Lord, I bless You for this persecution which makes me a partaker of Christ’s sufferings.” I say it becomes a comfort to us to be quickened by the Word when the ungodly are despising us.  
At the 53rd verse you will see that David was under the trouble of living among great blasphemers and doers of open wickedness. He says, “Horror has taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake Your Law.” He was horrified at their vices—he wished that he could get away from and never see or hear that which distressed him so much. But if the very sight and sound of sin drives us to pray and forces us to cry to God, the result is good, however painful the process may be! If men never swore in the streets, we should not so often be driven to cry to God to forgive their profanity. If you and I could always be shut up in a glass case and never see sin or hear of it, it might be a bad thing for us. But if, when we are compelled to see the wickedness of men and hear their curses and reviling, we can also feel that God’s Word is quickening us, even by our horror at sin, it is good for us! We have great comfort in this peculiar species of affliction, though it is exceedingly grievous to tender-hearted, pure and delicate minds who dwell near to God.  
Just read the 54th verse, and you will see another of David’s trials indicated. “Your statutes have been my song in the house of my pilgrimage.” He had many changes. He had all the trials of a pilgrim’s life—the discomforts of journeying in places where he had no abiding city. But, “This,” he says, “has been my comfort in my affliction.” Your Word has told me of a city that has foundations. Your Word has assured me that if I am a stranger upon earth, I am also a citizen of Heaven. “Your Word has quickened me.” I have felt myself so strengthened by Your Word that I have been glad to feel that this is not my rest. I am glad to feel that I must be away to a better land and so my heart has been happy and, “Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.”  
Lastly, in the 55th verse, you see David was in darkness. He says, “I have remembered Your name, O Lord, in the night, and have kept Your Law.” Even in the night he could derive comfort from the quickening influence which often comes to the soul from the Scriptures—even when we are surrounded by darkness and sorrow. I will not go over that ground, again, but certain it is that when our soul is shrouded in distress, it often becomes more active and gracious than when it is basking in the sunlight of prosperity.  
All along, then, dear Friends, your comfort and mine is the Word of God, laid home by God, the Holy Spirit, to our hearts, quickening us to an increase of spiritual life! Do not try to flee from your troubles. Do not fret under your cares. Do not expect this world to bring forth roses without thorns. Do not hope to prevent the springing up of briers and thistles. Ask for quickening! Ask for that quickening to come, not by new revelations nor by fanatical excitement, but by God’s own Word quietly applied by His own Spirit! So shall you conquer all your troubles, overcome your difficulties and enter into Heaven singing hallelujahs unto the Lord’s right hand and holy arm which have gotten Him the victory!

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 119:49-64.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—481, 119 (SONG III), 482.  
Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1652 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE SINGING PILGRIM  
NO. 1652

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.  
“Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.” Psalm 119:54.

THE 119th Psalm is said, by many, to consist of detached sentences and to be rather a casket of gold rings than a chain of united golden links, yet the position of this verse is somewhat remarkable, for the verse before it runs thus— “Horror has taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake Your Law.” Most of you know for yourselves what that sentence means, for if you hear a man swear in the streets, your blood runs chill with horror. And when you think of what has been said by blasphemers against the Person of our Divine Lord and against the Divine Truths of Revelation, you are horrified that men should have had the audacity to think—much less to say—such wicked things against the Most High God.

David rightly said, “Horror has taken hold upon me,” and then he added our text, as if he would say, “I am horrified that they should break the Law of God and tread it under foot, for to me it is an intense delight— ‘Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.’ That which is their scorn is my song. What they count dross is gold to me. How can they treat such precious Truths of God contemptuously?” He is horrified at the thought that what is, to him, the very soul of his life, and the life of his soul, should be to them a castoff and a hate. Surely some connection is visible here—these rings are evidently linked to each other.

It is well to notice the following verse. David writes, “I have remembered Your name, O Lord, in the night, and have kept Your Law”—as much as if he had said—“It is not always daylight with me; but when it is, Your statutes are my song. My sun is not always above the horizon; but when it is dark with me and I am in trouble, I do not forget You. You are still my solace. I remember Your name and I am comforted. If I may not see Your face, it is a joy to remember Your name, for they that know Your name will put their trust in You. If I can but remember Your name when my spirits sink, I shall have my soul stayed and upheld until the daylight shall again break in upon my spirit.” Is there not much sweetness in this hopeful assurance, much to make our text overflow with meaning?

And now I invite you to consider the text itself. It seems to me to talk about three things, three things which concern us. The first is a pilgrim, who is, secondly, a singing pilgrim. And this brings before us, thirdly, his songbook—“Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.”—

*“Sweet strains to me Your Laws have been, Sweet music in my heart,  
Where on my lonely pilgrimage*

**I sojourn all—apart.”**  
I. First, here is A PILGRIM. David was a type of all who are true disciples of Jesus. They are all pilgrims. A pilgrim is a person who is traveling through one country to another. If we are true to our profession, we are pilgrims with an emphasis, for, first, we belong to another country. We were not born here as to our highest nature. When we were born in the most emphatic sense, we were born of another country altogether—“not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God.” “Except a man is born again”—“from above,” says the margin—“he cannot see the kingdom of God.” We have been born from above. Our birth makes us citizens of the City which has foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God.

We are aliens, foreigners, strangers in this world. One said of old, “I am a stranger with you, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were.” And another said, “I am a stranger in the earth.” Indeed, all the faithful confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Jesus, our Leader, said, “You are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” And the beloved Apostle said, “You are of God, little children, and the whole world lies in the Evil One.” We are hurrying through this world as through a foreign land. We are in this country, not as residents, but only as visitors who take this country en route to Glory!

Ungodly men live as if they never meant to die. All their plans and preparations are evidently arranged for tarrying in this country. But if God has instructed you aright, you know assuredly that you shall die and you have become familiar with the thought of departing from these shores. Here you have no continuing city, but are like the tent-dwelling Patriarchs, who, by their very abodes, confessed that they looked for a possession yet to be given them. You look not only upon all other men as mortal, but upon yourselves as such—nor do you at all regret it—you would not stay here forever if you could! You know that you are emigrants to the laud of the unsetting sun and these lands are but traversed on the road to your eternal heritage.

This is a rare knowledge, peculiar to the godly. You may bring an unconverted man to be conscious of his mortality, but you cannot get him to realize that he is going to another land. No, he is going, he is going, he is going where he would not. He is hurried to the land of confusion and dismay where the shadow of death forever rests on hopeless spirits. You do not wonder, therefore, that he tries to avoid the remembrance of this troublesome fact, and that he journeys on with his eyes shut, trying to forget that his life’s voyage will ever end. To you, dear Friends, your passage through this world is not a transit to somewhere or to anywhere, for you know where you are going! As Jesus said to the disciples, “Where I go you know, and the way you know”—you know which way Jesus went and you know that you will go the same way—for He has promised that where He, is there you shall be, also.

One of His solemn declarations was, “Because I live, you shall live, also,” and one of His last prayers put this promise into the form of authority and claim—“Father, I will that they, also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My Glory.” If an Italian now in England passes through France on his way to Rome, he stays at Paris, or Lyons, or Marseilles on his journey. But all the while he is not a Frenchman, he is an Italian. Wherever he stays upon the road, he says to himself, “This is not Rome. This is not the place of my nativity. I have no citizen rights here. I am going onward to my own dear city and I must hasten as best I may until I reach it.” That is the condition of the Christian—his face is steadfastly set to go to the New Jerusalem—and nothing must detain him.

A pilgrim in the old crusading times started out to reach Jerusalem. You know how many were stricken with that insanity in those times—I commend them not, but I use the illustration in all soberness. The Crusader journeyed on foot across Europe. Whenever he came in sight of a goodly city, whether it was Vienna, or Constantinople, he stood and gazed upon the towers, the spires, the balconies. And when he had done so, he turned to his companion and said, “A fair sight, my Friend, but it is not the Holy City to which you and I are journeying.” So, whenever God brings us to any place, however pleasant or delightful it may be, it is for us to say, “A fair sight and God be thanked for it, but it is not the Golden City.”

Our gardens are not Paradise; our homes are not the Father’s house on high; our comforts are not our Heaven; our resting places are not the everlasting rest! We must not rest contented here below. We have not come to that promised land of which God has spoken to us in His Covenant. If we were mindful of the place from which we came out, truly we have had many opportunities to return—but we are not mindful of it—our whole desire lies in the opposite direction! Our citizenship rights and civic privileges connect us with a city whose jeweled walls and shining streets are waiting for our coming! Our Captain cries to us, “Forward.” Beyond the river our possessions lie. In another land is our everlasting abode. We are, then, pilgrims born in another country, passing through this world to an inheritance beyond.

A pilgrim’s main business is to get on and pass through the land as quickly as he can. You will remember how Israel desired to pass through the land of Sihon, King of Heshbon, and Moses offered these terms—“Let me pass through your land. I will go along by the highway. I will neither turn unto the right hand nor to the left: only I will pass through on my feet.” Sihon would not allow them to pass on these conditions—neither will the world grant us a similar privilege. The tribes had to fight their way and so must we. All we ask is a road. We may also beg the loan of six feet of earth for a sepulcher, but all else we will forego if we may the better proceed towards our inheritance! Not how to stay here in comfort, but how to pass through the land in holiness is our great question.

Sometimes a home sickness is upon us and then we are weary of this wilderness and pine for the land which flows with milk and honey. We hear the inviting heralds and the songs of those who hold high festival in the palaces above and we groan, being burdened, and long to end the days of this, our banishment—

*“Let me go, oh speed my journey,  
Saints and seraphs lure away.  
Oh, I almost feel the raptures  
That belong to endless day.  
Often I think I hear the singing  
That is only heard above.  
Let me go, oh speed my going,  
Let me go where all is love!”*

As pilgrims, it is true in our case that our relatives are not, the most of them, in this country. We have a few Brothers and Sisters with us who are going on pilgrimage and we are very thankful for them, for good company cheers the way. It is pleasant when Christiana can take her dear friend, Mercy, with her, and when her boys, Matthew and James, can go and Mr. Greatheart with them. Though, if necessary, Christian must leave Christiana and all the rest behind if they will not go with him—still it is much more pleasant to see them going on pilgrimage with us. Yet the majority of those dear to us are already over yonder. If I may not say the majority by counting heads, yet certainly in weight the great majority will be found to be in the far country.

Where is our Father? Where but in Heaven? And where is our Elder Brother? Is He not there, too, at the right hand of God? And where is the Bridegroom of our soul? The truest and best Bridegroom with whom we are joined in a marriage union which death cannot sever? Where, I say, is the Bridegroom of our souls? We know right well! And may not the bride desire the happy period of the home-bringing—the joyous marriage feast, the supper of the Lamb? Where our Father is and where Jesus is, must necessarily be our own country—and we are exiles till we reach it! If we have a clear eye for spiritual relationships, see what a host of our nearest and dearest ones have gone across the river, already, and are in Glory! Multitudes, multitudes are there! We are come unto “the general assembly and Church of the First-Born, whose names are written in Heaven.”

Let us, therefore, go on with great speed! Let us not think to tarry here, for our best friends and kindred have entered into their rest, and it becomes us to follow after them. And, you know, a man who is a pilgrim reckons that land to be his country in which he expects to remain the longest. Through the country which he traverses he makes his way with all speed. But when he gets home he abides at his leisure, for it is the end of his toil and travail. What a little part of life shall we spend on earth! When you and I have been in Heaven 10,000 years, we shall look back upon those 60 years we spent here as nothing at all! We will think of their pain as a pin’s prick, their gain a speck, their duration the twinkling of an eye!

Even if you have to tarry 80 or 90 years in this exile, when you have been in Heaven a million years, the longest life will seem no greater than a thought and you will wonder that you said the days were so weary and the nights so dreary, and that the years of sickness drug such a weary length along! Ah me, eternal bliss, what a drop you make of our sea of sorrow! Heaven covers up this present grief and so much overlaps it that we could fold up myriads of such mourning and still have garments of joy enough to clothe an army of the afflicted! We make too much of this poor life—and this fondness costs us dearly. Oh for a higher estimate of the Home country, with its delights forevermore! Then would the trials of a day exhale like the dew of the morning and scarcely secure an hour of sorrow.

We are only here for enough time to feel an April shower of pain—and then we are gone among the unfading flowers of the endless May! Therefore let us not make the most of the least, and the least of the most! But let us put things in their order and allot to this brief life its brief consideration—and to everlasting Glory its weight of happy meditation! We are to dwell throughout eternity with God! Is not that our Home? That is not a man’s residence into which he enters at the front door and in a moment passes out at the back and is gone, never to return, as though it were a mere passage from one street to another! And yet this is about all that Believers do as to this poor world. That is a man’s home where he can sit down at his ease and look on all around him as his own and say—

*“Here will I make a settled rest,  
While others go and come,*

*No more a stranger or a guest,  
But like a child at home.”*  
Yes, this shows that we are pilgrims, because we are here for so short a space compared with the length of time we shall spend in the dear country beyond!

One thing that always marks us as pilgrims is this—that we are treated by the people of this land as strangers. Different races of men reveal their nationality by their speech, their dress, their manners and their habits. That which is perfectly natural in a Dutchman seems ridiculous to a Frenchman; while the customs of a Chinaman horrify a Briton! As we who are of the hill country pass through these lowlands, the people discover our foreign character and take a wondering interest in us, sometimes of a friendly sort, but more often of a hostile kind. They marvel from where we are and, as they cannot make us out, they often come to the conclusion that we are acting a part and are nothing better than hypocrites and pretenders. They, of course, are honest, and all who are not like they must be false and contemptible! This suspicion and ill will does not happen to all professors, but more or less it falls to the lot of all genuine Christians.

They cannot be hid and yet they cannot be understood, for their life is hid. Gladly would they pass incognito through the land, but the men of the world will not have it so. They soon discover the pilgrim strangers and they think them very odd. I suppose they are so, if judged by the customs of the world. We do not drop into the ways and customs of the ungodly, for our Master said to us, “Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” Therefore, in this world, the true Christian is as strange as a Red Indian in Cheapside. People do not understand the saints—they cannot make them out—for they are constructed upon different principles from other men and often do things which men count foolish, unmanly and absurd.

The laws which govern them are not such as the world esteems. Hence it happens that the ungodly forge a strange name for a Christian—they cannot make heads or tails of him and so they set him up in their chamber of horrors, and fix a nickname upon him. They declare right positively, “He is mad.” Blessed madness! Another time they say, “He is a hypocrite.” One cries, “It is cant!” Another, “It is fanaticism!” Those are all expressions by which the world shows that it cannot make us out. Are you surprised when they use such titles? You ought to be very much surprised if they do not use them! If the utterly worldly man says, “I perfectly understand you,” then say to yourself, “Then I am like you, for if I had been different from you—if God’s Grace had given me a different way of thinking— you would have been sure to find fault with me.”

Oh, never be afraid of the world’s censure, Brothers and Sisters! Its praise is much more to be dreaded! When Socrates was told, “Such a man speaks well of you today,” the philosopher was by no means gratified, but concluded that he must have done something amiss that such a fellow should speak well of him. Take censures out of a foul month to be your highest praise, but praises out of such mouths are worse than abuse. We are strangers, speckled birds, curious creatures—beings that are twice born—who have a new life which is an enigma to ungodly men. “The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound thereof, but can not tell from where it comes, or where it goes. So is everyone that is born of the Spirit.” He is an unaccountable person. “You cannot tell from where he comes or where he goes.”

He who finds redemption and eternal life in Jesus is judged to be a strange, out-of-the-way being! He who looks for his happiness in the world to come is made, thereby, a pilgrim, and that is to men of this world a sort of gypsy life—fictitious, romantic, absurd and unpractical! We who are, indeed, such, accept our appointed condition and the scorn which often comes with it! And from now on we break loose from bonds of time and sense to seek another country—that is, a heavenly—

*“Cheerful, O Lord, at Your command  
I bind my sandals on.  
I take my pilgrim’s staff in hand,  
And go to seek the better land,  
The way Your feet have gone.”*

II. But now, secondly, according to our text, the Believer is A SINGING PILGRIM—“Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.” He does not say “my song,” only, but “my songs,” in the plural, as if he had been a great singer, given to singing, which proves that pilgrims to Heaven are a merry sort of people, after all! They have their trials—some trials more than those which other men know—but then they have their joys and among these joys are sweet delights such as worldlings can never taste! On the whole, Moses is right in his judgment of the Lord’s people: “Happy are you, O Israel.” “Blessed are the people,” says the Psalmist, “that know the joyful sound. They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Your Countenance.”

Holy pilgrims are happy! Theirs is not the caravan of despair, but the march of those who go from strength to strength. I hear a voice objecting, “You give a rose color to facts, for some religious people are very gloomy.” I dispute not the fact. For sure, some days are dark, and yet day is not the time of darkness—even at noontide he may dim—and yet noon is not the hour of gloom. On earth all men must eat some bitter herbs, whether they eat the paschal lamb or not. Moreover, all are not truly godly who profess to be so. They fancied they were religious and, therefore, felt themselves bound to keep up the profession—surliness and gloom are part of the buttressing by which they keep up the flimsy structure of their piety. Their religion is not real and so they make it terrible.

If your cheek is painted, you know that its ruddy line may yield to a handkerchief or to a drop of perfume and, therefore, you keep your distance and appear reserved. The countryman’s rubies are not so soon dissolved. The roses of good health are not so speedily uprooted. I have known people who painted themselves up as Christians and they felt it incumbent upon them to look very demure, or else their paint would have come off. They thought that they must add melancholy to their profession to imitate holiness. False notion! The gloom betrays the child of darkness. “But we measure people’s piety by the length of their faces,” says one. Do you? So do I and I like them short—the shorter the better! Those who draw very long faces do it as a matter of pretense and this is to be utterly condemned, for Jesus says that the Pharisees had such countenances that they might appear unto men to fast, but they were hypocrites to the core!

Let me tell you for a certainty—for I have the experience of many to back me up in it—that there is a quiet, rippling rill of intense comfort in a Christian’s heart, even when he is cast down and tried. And, at other times, when trials are lightened, there are cascades of delight, leaping cataracts of joy whose silver spray is as pure as the flash of the fountains of Paradise! I know that there are many here who, like myself, understand what deep depression of spirit means, but yet we would not change our lot for all the mirth of fools or pomp of kings! Our joy no man takes from us— we are singing pilgrims—though the way is rough. Amid the ashes of our pains live the sparks of our joys, ready to flame up when the breath of the Spirit sweetly blows on them.

Our latent happiness is a choicer heritage than the sinner’s riotous glee. When suffering greatly and scarcely able to stand, I was met by one who has long enjoyed good health and unbroken prosperity. His mind is coarse and his tongue rasps like a file. He is always fond of expressing his rational ideas as proof that he is a superior person. With sarcastic politeness he stood before me and said, “Dear, dear, what a sufferer you are! But it is what may be expected, for whom the Lord loves, He chastens.” I had barely time to admit that the chastening had been severe before he added, “You are very welcome to love which shows itself in that fashion. For my part, I had rather be without it and enjoy the use of my limbs. I can do better without your God than with Him.”

Then the hot tears scalded my eyelids and forced themselves a passage. I could bear the pain, but I could not endure to hear my God spoken evil of. I flamed up in indignation and I cried, “If instead of having pain in my legs I had a thousand agonies in every limb of my body I would not change places with you! I am content to take all that comes of God’s love. God and His chastening are better than the world and its delights.” Truly I know it to be so! My soul has a greater inner gladness in her deep despondency than the godless have in their high foaming merriments. Yes, and even pain is tutor to praise and teaches how to play upon all the keys of our humanity till a more complete harmony comes from us than perpetual health could have produced!

Was not Herbert right when he wrote of man’s double powers of grief and then found in them double fountains of praise?—  
*“But as his joys are double,  
So is his trouble.  
He has two winters, other things but one:  
Both frosts and thought do nip  
And bite his lips  
And he of all things fears two deaths alone. Yet even the greatest griefs  
May be reliefs,  
Could he but take them right and in their ways. Happy is he whose heart  
Has found the art  
To turn his double pains to double praise.”*

You that are lowest down in the scale of visible joy. You that are broken in pieces like wrecks grinding upon rocks. You that are a mass of pain and poverty—you will give your Lord a good word, will you not? You will say, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.” At our worst, we are better off than the world at its best! Godly poverty is better than unhallowed riches! Our sickness is better than the worldling’s health. Our abasement is better than the sinner’s honors. We count it better that we suffer pain like to the torture of death than that we bathe in pleasure—when that pleasure is the effect of sin. We will take God at all the discount you can put upon Him! And you shall have the world and all the compound interest which you are able to get out of such a sham. God’s people sing! They are the children of the sun, birds of the morning, flowers of the day!

Wisdom’s ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace. We hear a music which never ceases, full-toned and ascending high—and its soft cadences are with us in the night when darkness thickens upon darkness—and the heart is heavily oppressed. “Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.” Know you that paradox? Some of us have learned it, now, these many years. It seems that the Psalmist had times of very special delight— high days and holidays, or, as the old records write—“gaudy days,” days of overflowing joys. “Your statutes have been my songs.” He was not always singing—at least not at his highest pitch. But there were many brave times when he poured forth a song! If you and I cannot always sing, we do, sometimes, turn to that sweet amusement and while away the time. Remember how John Bunyan represents Mr. Ready-to-Halt, Mr. Feeble-Mind and all the rest of them? When they had cut off Giant Despair’s head, they danced, and Ready-to-Halt played his part upon his crutches! Yes, we have our merrymaking, Brothers and Sisters, at which angels find themselves at home! Pilgrims can sing and touch the lively string. When the Lord kills Giant Despair for us, we have our Psalms and Te Deums, and we praise the Lord upon the high-sounding cymbals! When we are brought from deep distress, our God deserves a song, and He shall have it, too. The heathens tune their hymns to great Diana or to Jove, and surely the living God shall not lack for praise!

Our hearts are poured out with as great delight and merriment as when the wine vats overflow. We know nothing, now, of the spirit of wine, for it is evil—but the wine of the Spirit—ah, that is another thing! It fills the heart with a Divine exhilaration which all the dainties of the world can never bestow! The singing pilgrim is a man who has a world of joy within Him and is journeying to another world, where, for Him, all will be joy to a still higher degree. He sings high praises unto God and blesses His name beyond measure, for He has reason to do so, reason which never slackens or lessens! Oh that we were always as we are, sometimes, then would our breath be praise! David remembered his best times. He says, “Your statutes have been my songs.” He remembered that he sang and sang often.

I want some of you who are troubled, tonight, to rest with us awhile and remember when you were the Lord’s choristers and sang as heartily as any of the company. You have hung your harps on the willows. That is a bad thing to do, but it is better to hang your harp on the willows than to break it, for it may be taken down and used again for the Lord’s Glory. Jesus, who has a tender heart for mourners, will see you, again, and your heart shall rejoice! Think not that the past has devoured all your happiness—hope lives, peace abides and joy is on the wing! Recall those sweet songs you loved to sing. Recall them, I say, and find in them arguments for renewed praise! If you cannot graze in the pastures of delight and feed upon new joys, ruminate upon the old ones and get from them rich nutriment for praise. Think of happier days, and be happier. Listen to the echoes of yours former Psalms and begin to sing again!

The thing that has been is the thing that shall be. “The Lord has been mindful of us, He will bless us.” The Psalmist bears his testimony that though, now, he may be mourning, yet he did once sing. I wish that Christians, whenever they feel discouraged and doubting, would not begin telling everybody, “Oh, I am bowed down,” without also saying, “I was not always so. For years I was free as a bird and did not envy an angel! Nor shall I always be sorrowful. I shall wear my plumes again and fill the air with my songs. I am not going to be always bowed down. I have sackcloth on my loins today, but I remember when I was dressed in silken apparel and rejoiced before the Lord. My sackcloth will not last long. ‘Weeping may endure for a night,’ it is the time for dews. ‘But joy comes in the morning.’ That is the time for sunlight and for bird singing—and so it will be with me.”

Recollect what you used to do, dear Friend, in the heyday of your faith—and tell others what you used to do that they may not think you have always been a knight of the rueful countenance! Do not let the Hill Mizar and the Hermonites be quite forgotten. When “deep calls unto deep,” say—“I will remember Your former loving kindnesses and joys long past, and so will I put my trust in You.” Well may every pilgrim to Heaven be a singing pilgrim because he is getting, every day, nearer to the land where it is all singing! There are many delights in Heaven, but the main thing about Heaven is the adoration of God. Oh, if I might once adore with my whole being, I would never ask to do anything else, forever, but to melt away in reverent worship of the blessed God!

Oh, what singing that will be, when you will sing your best, your heart made perfect to sing worthily in accord with the place and theme! Oh for the music which is all harmony and no discord! What music that will be when all the dear voices which have been hushed, which we can hardly think of, now, without a tear, will all ring out clearly the praises of God— when all the myriad voices that have gone before will join in full chorus— when all shall be perfect and all shall be there and shall praise God forever! Come, Pilgrim, sing, for you are going to sing forever!

Now, rehearse your blessed anthem! Sing unto the Lord now, since you are to sing unto the Lord world without end—  
*“Such songs have power to quiet  
The restless pulse of care  
And come like the benediction  
That follows after prayer.  
And the night shall be filled with music  
And the cares that infest the day  
Shall fold their tents, like the Arabs,  
And as silently steal away.”*

III. Now, I must come to a close, for time admonishes me, and the last head was to be THE SONGBOOK—“Your statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.” The Bible is a wonderful book. It serves a thousand purposes in the household of God. I recollect a book my father used to have, entitled, “Family Medicine,” which was consulted when any of us fell sick with juvenile diseases. The Bible is our book of family medicine. In some houses, the book they most consult, is a “Household Guide.” The Bible is the best guide for all families. This Book may be consulted in every case and its oracle will never mislead. You can use it at funerals. There are no such words as those which Paul has written concerning the resurrection of the dead! You can use it for marriages—where else can you find such holy advice to a wedded pair?

You can use it for birthdays. You can use it for a lamp at night. You can use it for a screen by day. It is a universal Book! It is the Book of books and has furnished material for mountains of books! It is made of what I call, “bibline,” or the essence of books. I am preaching to you tonight as a man without books. I cannot get at any of my books, for they are all packed away! But I have a library here in having this one volume, which is, in fact, a number of books bound together! This one Book is enough to last a man throughout the whole of his life, however diligently he may study it. It seems that David, when he was a pilgrim, used the part which he had of this blessed Book as a songbook. It was nearly all history. What could he find to sing of there? He sang the wars and victories of the God of Israel!

You and I have a bigger book than David had—can we say that, as pilgrims, we use this blessed Book for songs? Truly we ought to do so, for this is the Book that started us on pilgrimage. The blessed teachings of this Book, sent home by the Holy Spirit, made us flee from the City of Destruction and made us seek the road that leads to eternal life. We sing about this Book, for it is “perfect, converting the soul.” It turned our feet from dangerous ways of folly, sin and shame. By the lessons of this Book—

*“Grace taught our soul to pray,  
And made our eyes overflow,”*  
and, therefore, we sing of the gracious statutes of the Lord!

We use this Book for a songbook, as pilgrims, because it tells us the way to Heaven. We often sing as we come to a fresh spot on the route and bless God that we find the road to be just as we have read in the waybook, just as our Divine Master said it would be! Well may we sing a song of gratitude for an Infallible Word. We love this Book because it speaks of other pilgrims who have gone this way. It is a Book full of stories of the worthies of old, of whom it tells us—

*“Once they were mourning here below,  
Who wet their couch with tears,  
They wrestled hard, as we do now,  
With sins, and doubts, and fears.”*

It is very delightful to us to read and know how they conquered—and to learn that all true pilgrims who keep to the high road will conquer! So we sing of Gideon, of Barak, of Jephthah, of David, and, above all, of the great Prince of Pilgrims who went that way!

We love this Book because it describes the life and death of the Prince of Pilgrims, even our Lord Jesus! Many a sweet song we get concerning Him, as we rehearse the story of what He did and suffered for us here below and what He is doing for us now! This Book tells us the privileges of pilgrims, both here and hereafter, and of the care which the Lord of Pilgrims shows towards all who seek the better country. Best of all, if better can be than what we have said, already, we love this Book because it tells us of the place to which we are going. Oh, how it paints that city, not in many words, but in suggestive similes!

How wonderfully it talks to us of our abode! Why, if it said no more than, “they shall be with Me where I am, that they may behold My Glory,” we would know enough of Heaven to make our hearts dance for joy! To be with Jesus where He is! To behold His Glory! This is bliss pressed down and running over, more than our hearts can hold! Have you ever seen the heavenly country? Have your eyes ever been permitted to rest upon it? “No,” says one, “certainly not. ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard.’” A very nice text, Brother. Go on with it; go on with it! You may make God say what He does not mean if you quote only half a text! He says, “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, the things which God has prepared for them that love Him; but God has revealed them unto us by His Spirit.”

Hence we know these joys by Revelation and that is the best of knowledge! The eye has not seen, but we have done with seeing with eyes when we deal with spiritual things! Our ears have not heard—these are poor deaf things. At best they only hear mortal sounds! But we have an inward function, faculty, power of hearing without ears! God does not speak in audible tones to his children and yet He speaks to them and they hear Him! We have a spirit which dispenses with fleshly faculties when it comes to dealing with God. He has revealed to us somewhat of the joy of communion with Christ; somewhat of the joy of conquered sin; somewhat of the joy of beholding His face and praising and blessing His name. We know, already, somewhat of the joy of being made like He and one with Him—and all this sets our feet on the top of Mount Clear—and puts the telescope to our eyes. And if our hand is steady, as, thank God, sometimes it is, we see the City and we long to enter it! “Your statutes have been my song in the house of my pilgrimage,” because there I read of what is to be my Home when pilgrim days are over and I shall see the Master face to face!

Now, dear Hearers, do you sing out of this holy Book? A country may be judged by its songs and so may an individual. Do you sing the Song of Songs? Are God’s statutes royal music for you? A wise man once said that he would permit anybody to make the laws of a country if he had the making of the ballads, for these kindle the spirit and fashion the character. What do you sing, Brothers and Sisters? What do you sing? I leave that question as a heart-searching one—what do you sing? Or are you one that never sings at all? Poor Soul, how do you live here and where will you live hereafter? Where must non-singers go? God give you a singing heart and may you sing unto the Well-Beloved a song touching the Well-Beloved and keep on singing it “till the day break and the shadows flee away.” God bless you. Amen.

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GOD OUR PORTION AND HIS WORD OUR TREASURE  
NO. 1372

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 2, 1877, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“You are my portion, O Lord: I have said that I would keep Your Words.” Psalm 119:57.**

OBSERVE the close connection between privilege and duty. “You are my portion, O Lord.” This is an unspeakable happiness. “I have said that I would keep Your Words”—this is the fitting return for such a blessing. Every mercy given us by the Lord brings with it a claim which we ought, in gratitude, to recognize. Notice very carefully the order in which the privilege and the duty are arranged. The blessing of Grace is first and the fruit of gratitude next. The Grace given is the root and the resolve is the fruit growing out of it. It is not, “I have said that I would keep Your Words, that You may be my portion, O Lord.” No, first the portion is enjoyed by faith and then the resolution is formed. “You are my portion, O Lord, I have You already in present possession. Therefore will I, as You shall help me, keep Your Words.”

Duty in order to privilege is the Law—God be thanked that we are not under it, for we should never obtain a single blessing thereby! But privilege in order to obedience is the Gospel—God grant that we may know the fullness of its power to sanctify our souls! The Lord must first be your portion before you will be able to keep His Words. How can a man keep what he has not received? Without God to be our portion, where will the strength come from to accomplish so difficult a duty as the keeping of God’s Words? See to it, all of you, that you do not reverse the order! Do not, as the old proverb says, put the cart before the horse.

Let all things come in their due course and keep due rank, for mischief comes of the wrong placing of things. First receive from Divine Grace until you can say, “You are my portion, O Lord,” and then give forth, by daily service, what God has worked within, and say, “I will keep Your Words.” Each possession not only involves service, but appropriate service, even as each plant bears it own flower. The general principle which calls for service bears a particular application, for each particular Gospel benefit is linked with some special Gospel service. The unspeakable gift of having God for our portion has here fastened to it the peculiar excellence of keeping God’s Words and one objective of the present sermon will be to show that this is by no means an accidental arrangement, but that a true connection really exists and ought to be earnestly acknowledged by every child of God.

Because you can say, “You are my portion, O Lord,” you ought, also, to add, “I will keep Your Words.” First, this morning, let us consider the infinite possession—“You are my portion, O Lord.” Secondly, the appropriate resolution—“I have said that I would keep Your Words.”

I. Begin, then, where the text begins, with THE INFINITE POSSESSION. “You are my portion, O Lord.” Here, first, notice a clear distinction. The Psalmist declares the Lord to be his portion in distinction to the portion of the ungodly. “These often have their portion in this life; they increase in riches.” The 73rd Psalm gives a full and particular description of the ungodly in their prime and glory when, “their eyes stand out with fatness” and, “they have more than heart can wish.”

But David did not desire to share their short-lived joys. He sought his happiness elsewhere, looking to the Creator rather than the creatures and to eternity rather than time—

*“What sinners value I resign,  
Lord, ‘tis enough if You are mine.”*

“You are my portion, O Lord.” It is better to have our good God than all the goods in the world! It is better to have God for our All than to have all and be without Him. He who possesses God lives at the wellhead and drinks from the ever-flowing fountain. He who owns the choicest worldly goods, apart from Him, only drinks of the foul leavings which remain in the corners of earth’s broken cisterns. What is the whole universe compared with Him who made it? What are the base pleasures of sin compared with the fullness of joy which always dwells at God’s right hand?

David says, “You are my portion,” evidently in opposition to the future portion of the wicked. “Upon the wicked, God shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup.” There is to come to the ungodly a dreadful awakening from their dream of security. They shall wake up in another world to find that their wealth has vanished, their joys have forever fled and that they must forever suffer the loss of all things and remain utterly undone. For them an unutterable woe is prepared and wrath like a fierce hurricane shall heat upon their guilty souls without end!

But, “You are my portion, O Lord.” For me there shall be no deadly snares in life, nor horrible tempest in death. So long as I abide in this body, I shall be fed upon Your goodness, and when I shall fall asleep and shall afterwards awaken in the likeness of my Redeemer, I shall find myself in eternal possession of my God who is my All in All. Nor does the distinction end here. David here makes a distinction between his true position and the earthly comforts with which the Lord had endowed him. He was a king and had many possessions, but none of these were his portion! Some of the Lord’s people are not the subjects of distressing poverty—on the contrary, they are blessed with many comforts for which they ought to praise God day and night—but none of these things are their peculiar heritage as joint heirs with Jesus.

Beloved, whatever we have in this world we are bound to turn our eyes to God and say, “This is not my portion. You are my portion, O Lord.” The comforts of this life are like the youth’s allowance—they are not the estate to which he is the heir—upon which he will enter when the fullness of time shall come. Present mercies are a sip by the way, a morsel eaten to satisfy the stomach—our full meal will be eaten at the Great Supper of the Lamb! We are like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in Canaan, dwelling in tents, as strangers and foreigners. The flocks and herds which graze around our camp are greatly valued, but still, we look not on those things as our portion—Canaan itself is the lot of our covenanted inheritance— and nothing else will content us. We look for a city which has foundations whose Builder and Maker is God!

Oh, Beloved, take care of ever making common things your portion! If riches increase, set not your heart upon them! If God indulges you with a healthful and happy family. If you are in a good state of bodily health. If your business prospers and if the Lord pours out for you temporal mercies from a full horn, yet never make these things your idols! Live above them and say, “I cannot be put off with these. You are my portion, O God.” I think David carried this distinction right into eternity.

Some think of Heaven as this and some as that. Fellowship with Believers of all ages is the great desire of some. Others long for Paradise as a place of increased knowledge, to know even as they are known. And a third rejoice in it chiefly as a haven of rest. There are grounds for each of these forms of desire, but concerning Heaven, this is the Believer’s chief thought—that he will be with God, and that God will be forever his joy and bliss! No sins will hide the brightness of Jehovah’s Glory from our eyes! No doubts will disturb the deep calm of our enjoyment of Jehovah’s love when once we fully enter upon our portion. We shall be forever with the Lord and nothing more or better can be imagined!

God is our Heaven! Whom have I in Heaven but You? Draw, then, a clear distinction between the things that are seen, which are not your portion, and the things which are not seen, which are your true heritage. Between the temporal and fleeting joys which amuse us by the way and the abiding and eternal felicity which will satisfy us at the end. Allow nothing to rival the chief good in your judgment or your affections, but cry evermore, “O God, You are my God; early will I seek You.”

Notice, next, the positive claim—“You are my portion, O Lord.” He deliberately declares this in the silence of his soul. As for the ungodly, they are boasting of their prosperity. They are girding themselves with pride as with a golden chain. But I dare not seek my joy in such matters, “You are my portion, O Lord.” To get into a corner quietly. To commune with your heart and be still. And then to find your soul reveling in the wealth which she finds in her God—this is true happiness! Let worldlings babble on as they may and let the trumpet of fame sound out its loudest blasts for her darlings—we will not envy her rich men or her great men so long as in the deep of our spirit we can feel that the Eternal, Himself, has declared, “I will be their God.”

Ours is the best portion by far! Whether we have little or much, our hereafter is our true treasure, for then shall we enjoy our God to the full. These storerooms and barns, banks and iron safes cannot hold our portion—behold our treasure is secured where neither moth nor rust does corrupt, neither do thieves break through and steal. It is worthy of observation that this clear claim which David sets up is not merely felt in his own heart, but it is uttered in the most solemn place, even in the Presence of God. He addresses himself to the all-seeing, heart-searching God and cries, “You are my portion, O Lord.” Though I stand before You, great God, even before You who can read me through and through, yet I dare make my claim—You know all things and You know that I do choose You to be my All in All.

Though I gaze upon Your splendor, which bids angels veil their faces because of its excess of Glory, yet I call that splendor mine! However great You are, I adore with trembling, but yet my faith calls Your greatness mine. You are my portion! Nothing less than Your own Self, O infinitely glorious, Omnipotent, thrice-holy Jehovah! My soul does not bound her humble claim, nor rest content with a part of You, but You, Father, Son and Holy Spirit—You one God—and You, Yourself, are my portion!

Do you see how fully assured of his interest in Divine Love a man must be if He dares to speak thus in the Presence of the infinite Majesty and to challenge the Divine judgment upon his claim? You see he speaks in the present tense. There are a great many whose religion lies in, “shall be,” hope and trust, but David’s faith lay in the present tense. “You are my portion, O Lord.” There are some things which I have not received as yet, but I have already laid hold upon my God. Many things I press forward to obtain, for I have aspirations which are, as yet, unfulfilled, and spiritual ambitions not yet satisfied, but You are even now my God, despite my infirmities and shortcomings. Yes, even today, my God, You are mine.

At this hour, “My Beloved is mine, and I am His.” I know whom I have believed. I know that He has given Himself to me as I have given myself to Him. Beyond a doubt, You are, at this very moment, my portion, O Lord. May the Lord teach you, Brothers and Sisters, to speak in the same confident manner. If true Believers, you have a right to speak so because you simply declare a fact. Do not be satisfied to leave such a matter in question—aim at positive certainty. Pray the Lord to give you the full assurance of faith that you may always unwaveringly say, “You are my portion, O Lord.”

Now let us linger for a few moments while we muse upon the portion, itself, a subject which it might require many an hour to consider fully. The text contains an intelligent description of this portion—“You are my portion, O Lord.” The Psalmist at once mentions the very heart and center of his spiritual wealth—“

You are my portion, O Lord.” What a boundless portion! Parochial authorities beat the bounds of the parish and great men make surveys of their estates, but none can beat the bounds or make a full survey of this inheritance of the saints! A man takes stock in trade, or sits down to balance his accounts, but there is no taking stock here— towards the infinite God there are no calculations—figures are lost and even imagination swallowed up!

Our inheritance surpasses that of all the men of the world put together! Yes, and apart from having something of the like, even angels could not vie with us! Heaven itself is not so vast a treasure as the God of Heaven! How ought we to prize an inheritance which knows no boundary! Indeed, Brothers and Sisters, we require something boundless—our soul pines for the infinite! I appeal to those of you who have been favored in Divine Providence with prosperity beyond what you expected. Do you feel that it fills your soul? You are content that God should give you what He wills, but do you find satisfaction in earthly property?

What if your children are a comfort to you and your house is filled with all manner of provisions and friendly neighbors speak well of you? Can you find perfect rest in these things? Do they yield you inward, heartfilling joy? I know they cannot! If you were to be as highly favored as Solomon, himself, who beyond all men enjoyed this present world, yet would you have to come to Solomon’s own conclusion, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” For a regenerate man, this life is like a bird within a shell just wakened into life. However comfortable the shell may be for him, in its way and after its fashion, yet as life becomes vigorous, he needs more space. He needs wing room, he needs to get out of his prison and roam at large!

The things which are seen are a prison to the soul—our spirit needs more air, more space in which to breathe. When a man can truly say, “My God, You are mine,” he has touched the confines of the infinite and he has reached the Ultima Thule of his spirit, where he may cast anchor and no more tempt the troubled sea of desire. When we reach God, our soul is at peace, but not till then—for then the immortal soul has gained the immortal God and eternal destiny is sealed with happiness by eternal love! And while this inheritance is boundless, how abiding it is! A man who has the Lord for his portion has a freehold for eternity! His lease will never run out and there will need no renewal of lives, for there is one life on which our tenure hangs and that is everlasting! “Because I live, you shall live, also.”

He that gets God has an entailed estate. He has in Him a Friend who cannot change, who cannot fail, who cannot cease to be, nor cease to be the source of blessedness to those who possess Him. Of this portion time cannot deprive us, nor death rob us, nor judgment deprive us, nor eternity bereave us. “This God is our God forever and ever.” Ah, you worldlings, all your goods shall wither like Jonah’s gourd, but our God shall be our shield and our exceedingly great reward, world without end! As the Lord is an abiding portion, so is He an appropriate portion in every way suitable to content the soul.

Man was made in the image of God, and nothing will satisfy man but God, in whose image he was made. Manna was fit food for man and God Himself is fit sustenance for the man of God. Only in the Lord can the mind and heart find that which all their faculties require for their development and perfection. When renewed by Grace, our powers are adapted to receive God and to rejoice in Him and, therefore, a full possession of God is the craving of the heart. In God there is food for memory which looks upon the past and for hope which gazes into the future. There is food for the judgment, which weighs, for the will, which decides—for the affections, which clasp and for the imagination, which creates.

There is no power of humanity which is properly a part of God-made man which does not find its due sphere and place in God. How well my portion suits me! Adam was not more at home in Paradise than I am in

my God. My soul, by Grace, is brought into a place of sweet content and delights herself in the abundance of peace. This portion is to the fullest degree, satisfying. Nothing else will ever end the awful hunger of the soul of man, which, like the grave, forever yawns for more. But the infinite God fills the heart and he who has the Lord for his portion has all that he can desire—

*“All my capacious powers can wish*

*In You does richly meet.”*  
You may sit down and imagine all that you could have wished—and then if you rightly view your God—you will see that He surpasses all your desires. Never, even in eternity, will you be able to conceive of a joy beyond your God, a bliss surpassing Himself!

Next, dear Brothers and Sisters, the Lord is an elevating portion. A man is gradually changed into the image of that which he loves. He who has his portion in this world grows worldly. When a man gives himself to any pursuit he, first of all molds it, and then it molds him. We say a man rides a hobby, but after a while the hobby rides the man. You will find it so. Now, if a man seeks his wealth in the things of this life and covets gold, he will become metallic, hard, and unfeeling. He who lives to increase his land soon becomes of the earth, earthy. To pursue carnal things will degrade a man, cramp his mind and hold him in captivity to base materialism. He that loves to hoard that he may gratify his covetousness by counting over his stores—what a wretched creature he becomes!

Better, by far, to be a poor squirrel who, in due time, enjoys the little store of nuts and acorns! The worldling is little better than the mole who burrows through the earth and never looks upon the sun. Earth, earth, earth—nothing but earth does the carnal heart care for—its faculties are all pressed downward and forced to become adapted for its groveling sphere. Nothing is more debasing than to live for self and, the more a selfish man has, the more base-hearted he becomes.

But if our portion is the Lord, our delight in Him raises our thoughts and purifies our emotions. Covetousness, selfishness, worldliness all vanish when God is All in All to us. If God is ours, we seek to be like He is— we become followers of God as dear children. “He that has this hope in him purifies himself.” He who is possessed of the light is filled with light— He who has God is filled with God. The Holy Spirit transforms us until, at last, He makes us to be qualified to dwell with Him forever. Only one more thought on this portion, although many are crowding upon my mind. If God is my portion, then my portion is all of Grace, for no one can merit God. The idea is utterly ridiculous, if not profane. No human excellence could merit Deity. If, then, the Lord is my portion, let my song always be of that rich, free, sovereign, boundless Grace which is given to me who deserves Hell, but obtains Heaven!

I want to call your attention, once more, to this infinite possession, or rather to the seasonable utterance of David concerning it, for it is very noteworthy that this holy claim has generally been made by godly men at peculiar times. Did you ever notice the parallel passages? Truly the Lord is His people’s God at all times, but His people rejoice most in the possession of Him when they have most trouble. In the particular instance fore us I find in the 51st verse, “The proud have had me greatly in derision: yet have I not declined from Your Law.” And in the 61st verse—“The bands of the wicked have robbed me: but I have not forgotten Your Law.”

David appears to have been between two fires—derided by the proud and robbed by the oppressor—and it is in the middle of this double trouble that he puts in his claim, “You are my portion, O Lord.” Perhaps the robbers helped him to think more of that treasure which no thief can steal. Perhaps the derision of the proud made him remember the kindly condescension of the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, who deigned to be his portion. Look at another instance, where the same language is used, namely, in Psalm 16:5, and you will find the Psalmist declares, “The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup: You maintain my lot. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices: my flesh, also, shall rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Hell; neither will You suffer your Holy One to see corruption.”

So far as this language is that of David, you see that he claims God for his portion in the prospect of death and the grave. How good it is to have a living hope in dying moments, to be full of light when peering into the darkness of the grave! When death is taking away everything else, then does the Christian cling to the portion which can never be touched by Death’s bony fingers. Read, again, in the 73rd Psalm, at the 26th verse. There Asaph claims God as his portion. But you know the Psalm is all about the trouble of mind which he felt while he fretted over his own affliction and contrasted it with the prosperity of the wicked.

One more instance. In Lamentations 3:24, Jeremiah says, “The Lord is my portion, says my soul; therefore will I hope in Him.” But that is said in connection with a long roll of sorrows concerning which the Prophet had said, “O that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears.” Beloved, learn this lesson—if in Scripture you find God claimed as the portion of His saints when under different forms of trial, then when you are in deep affliction and when you come near to die, you, also, may find the strength of your heart and the sustenance of your courage in this same blessed fact that the Lord is your portion.

II. Secondly, let us consider THE APPROPRIATE RESOLUTION—“I have said that I would keep Your Words.” Here notice the preface, “I have said.” Why did he not put it, “You are my portion, O Lord; I will keep Your Words”? No, he writes “I have said it,” which means

 deliberation. He had thought over his happiness in having such a portion. What then? His thoughts began to stir within him and to devise a fit expression for his gratitude and he, at last, said, “I will keep Your Words.”

It was no hasty thought but a determined resolve. I suppose he also means that he had given a distinct pledge. He had opened his mouth to the Lord and could not go back. “I have said”—to my God, to myself, to my fellow men—“I have said I will keep Your Words.” It signifies, also, an adherence to what had been said—I have said it and that is the end of all questions about it. Do not distress me any more, the die is cast. I have

said it, and—  
*“High Heaven, that heard the solemn vow, That vow renewed shall daily hear:  
Till in life’s latest hour I bow,  
And bless in death a bond so dear.”*

I have said it, my God, and I will not unsay it. What I have written I have written. Others have heard me say it. I have said it in the presence of a cloud of witnesses—men and angels looking on. I have said it and so let it stand in time and in eternity.

It is time that we investigated the link between the portion possessed and the resolution made. It is not very difficult to discover. God is best known to us by His Words. His works reveal Him by a reflected light as the moon, but His Words display Him by a direct light as a very sun of light to us. How do I know God except by His Words? The God of Revelation is the Christian’s God. Philosophers, nowadays, worship a god of their own imagination—they construct a god out of their own consciousness and a very pretty god he is, indeed! But the God of the Christian is the God who has spoken and whose Words are preserved here, in THE BOOK. The God of the Inspired Word is our God and because this God is our portion and we know Him by His Words, therefore have we said we will keep His Words.

I want you to notice that there always seems to have been a connection between the possession of the portion and the keeping of the Words of God. When God said to Abraham, “Fear not, Abram: I am your shield, and your exceedingly great reward,” (Gen. 15:1), a little further down, in the 6th verse, we read, “And he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness.” First he receives God to be his own—“I am Your shield”—and then he keeps God’s Word, for he believes it. How did he know that God was his shield except through the Word which God had spoken to him?

Notice in the first verse, “After these things the Word of the Lord came unto Abram,” and again in the 4th verse, “And, behold, the Word of the Lord came unto him.” He believed—this was Abraham’s way of keeping the Words of the Lord and it is worthy of our imitation. Oh for Grace to believe every Word that God speaks and to never start aside unto unbelief on any pretense whatever, for every Word of the Lord is sure and abides true forever! By keeping God’s Words we fulfill the type of Israel in the wilderness.

Do you not remember the story of the manna, which is contained in the 16th of Exodus? Now, the manna is so named, according to Rabbi Kimchi, because the people saw in it their “portion.” Our version reads, “They said, It is manna”—for they were not sure what it was, but according to the rabbi, they said, “It is a portion: for they knew not what it was.” Men did eat angels’ food in the wilderness! They realized, there, that, “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” Their feeding on manna was the type of the Lord being our portion! But what then? They ate the manna, but did they keep any part of it?

Assuredly they did! Look at the 32nd verse, “This is the thing which the Lord commands, Fill an omer of it to be kept for your generations; that they may see the bread wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Egypt. And Moses said unto Aaron, Take a pot, and put an omer full of manna therein, and lay it up before the Lord, to be kept for your generations.” God Himself is my manna, or portion and, therefore, I will treasure Him up as He is revealed in His Word, which is the golden pot in which the heavenly food is preserved. Brothers and Sisters, let us keep the Divine Word in the very secrets of our heart as in a golden pot, saying with the Psalmist, “Your Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against You.”

Another beautiful type of the exaltation which the Believer gets when he can practically realize our text will be found in Numbers 18:20, “And the Lord spoke unto Aaron, You shall have no inheritance in the land, neither shall you have any part among them: I am Your part and your inheritance among the children of Israel.” See, Beloved, we take our share with the high priest, for he had God to be his only portion. Was it not a better portion than all the rest put together? Happy are the people whom the Lord Jesus has made to be priests and to whom He has given the priest’s portion, namely, Himself!

But what is our duty if this is the case? We must note how the priests of the tribe of Levi behaved and imitate them. We read in Deuteronomy 33:9—“Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: or they have observed Your Word, and kept Your Covenant.” Their heritage was the Lord and they kept His Words, for the priest’s lips should keep knowledge. They lived upon the meat of the Lord’s house and they were bound carefully to keep His ordinances. If you are priests unto God it falls unto you, likewise, that as God is the lot of your inheritance and your portion, your daily business is, like the tribe of Levi, to observe the Word of God and keep His Covenant.

Moreover, the Words of God are our title-deeds to our portion. Men despise them and so might a stranger pour contempt upon old deeds relating to property in which he has no concern. “What is the good of those old parchments?” says the ignorant man when he sees legal documents. “What is the good of the old Book?” cry others even more ignorant! Ah, we know their value—those to whom those title-deeds secure an inheritance prize them exceedingly! Whenever you hear people talking about Bibliolatry and finding fault with us for believing in verbal Inspiration, you will find that they set small store by Covenant treasures. And, what is more, you will soon discover that they tamper with our Divine charter in order to rob us of the choice Truths of the Gospel—and that the top and bottom of their meddling with the Divine Words of Inspiration is a design to take away their portion from the people of God.

Leave them alone and you will soon see them tearing away one privilege after another and making great havoc with our comforts. Therefore, warned by what we have seen them do, we have said, “I will keep Your Words,” for we shall not, otherwise, be able to keep God for our portion. If we let even the jots and tittles go, we may soon discover a flaw in our title and we cannot afford to do that! Our possession is too precious for us to tamper with the securities by which we hold it. “You are my portion, O Lord; I have said that I would keep Your Words.”

Now, very briefly, what is this work of keeping God’s Words? I pray God, the Holy Spirit, to help us to know it by practically carrying it out every day of our lives. First, then, there is a WORD which above all is to be kept, enshrined in the heart and obeyed in the life. “In the beginning was the Word.” That very name, “the Word,” given to Christ, puts the highest honor upon every other Word of Revelation. Beware of trifling or being negligent towards any Word of the Lord, since Jesus Christ is the chief and sum of the Words of God. Keep Him, hold Him, abide in Him, continue in Him, never let Him go. “I have said that I would keep Your Words”—this means the Words of the Gospel.

This we will accept by sincere and simple faith. The Gospel of Free Grace, of Substitution, of Atonement by blood, of Justification by Faith— this we will hold by faith right steadfastly so long as we breathe. All our hope hangs there and, therefore, there we will abide, neither shall any seduce us from it. “I have said that I would keep Your Words”—that is, “I will believe Your doctrines.” When I cannot comprehend the great mysteries I will still believe them. Though others dispute, I will believe! Despite the insinuations of crafty men, I will hold to the doctrines of Grace intensely—believing them as long as Reason holds her Throne.

What I see to be in God’s Word I will not dare to doubt or neglect. The Doctrines of Grace are the backbone of the Christian life. Keep to them for your comfort and you shall never be ashamed of them. If you willingly tamper with any one of the doctrines, there is no knowing where you will drift. Cast out more anchors—never let the vessel drift. “I have said that I would keep Your Words,” that is, Your Words of precept. What You bid me do, I will delight to do. I will not merely rejoice in the doctrines, but in the commands, also, and I will ask for Grace to obey them all. I will keep Your ordinances, too, for they are a part of Your Word and are to be kept as they were delivered, without addition or diminution.

I will not say, “This is non-essential, and this is unimportant,” but, “I have said that I would keep Your Words and keep them I will, through Your Grace, in every particular. I will do what You bid me, as you bid me, when You bid me.” So much evil has grown out of slight departures from Scripture that Christian men ought to be very scrupulous and carefully observe every ordinance as it is set forth in the Word of God. “I have said that I would keep Your Words,” that is, I will keep Your promises in my heart to comfort me. I will keep them in my faith, expecting their fulfillment. I will keep them in my mind for daily use and solace. And on my tongue, that I may encourage others.

Since the Lord keeps His promises by fulfilling them, we ought to keep them by remembering them. “I have said that I will keep Your Words,” and this especially includes the Word which the Lord has pledged in His Covenant. I will rejoice to think that You have, by deed of gift, made Yourself over to me! Now will I keep in mind Your Word and oath pledged to the Lord Jesus on my behalf! Now will I rejoice in the blood which ratified the Covenant and in the Covenant Word itself. See what an ocean of room I have in my topic and yet I have merely coasted and skirted the shore! What boundless sailing room there would be if we were to launch out into the deep!

My Brothers and Sisters, pray for Grace to keep every Word of God with all your hearts! Do not believe, as some do, that it does not matter what is truth or what is falsehood. It makes all the difference conceivable! God’s Word against man’s word any day in the week! I fear that the ancient power of Protestantism has evaporated through the influence of those who hold loose views upon Inspiration and who are busy manufacturing new gospels instead of preaching the old one which is already in the Word. The great thinkers may propound what they choose and the learned men of this age may invent what doctrines they like, but one thing I know—they will not cause those who have God for their portion to give up His Words!

For these 24 years you have found me here preaching the Words of God and you will find me here, still, if I live another 24 years. By His Grace I am incapable of moving one inch away from the old faith! One thing I know, namely, the Gospel of Substitution! And one thing I do, namely, preach it! I have determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him Crucified! When we get through all the Words of God we will begin them again—but we shall still keep to the old Book and its old, old story! The children shall go on eating their daily bread and, not even for novelty’s sake, will we give them the stones of modern thought!

Now, to conclude. This blessed subject very painfully suggests to me a solemn contrast. Will you, at your leisure, read another portion which the Lord reserves for certain persons? God grant we may never inherit it! It is the portion for hypocrites. In Matthew 24:50, our Lord speaks very strongly of some and I will tell you the reason why He deals so terribly with them. He says of some that, “the Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looks not for Him and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

Do you know what this man had done? He had not kept Christ’s Word! His Master had said that He would come, and he did not keep the word about His second coming, nor believe in it at all, but, according to the 48th verse, he said, “My Lord delays His coming.” And then he began to act upon it, to smite his fellow servants and to eat and drink and to be drunk, so that, not keeping what some think a very small matter—the Word concerning the future coming of Christ—he was found to be a hypocrite and had his portion appointed with false-hearted pretenders.

The same passage, with a little variation, comes in Luke 12:46, where the unfaithful servant is said to have his “portion with unbelievers,” which is equally to be dreaded. The threat seems most to apply to ministers and teachers of the Word who are unfaithful to the Truth of God. The condemned one was not a faithful and wise steward and did not bring forth things new and old with which to feed his Master’s servants and he, also, doubted whether his Master would ever come to call him to account. And

so he had his portion among unbelievers.

It will be an awful thing for me and for any minister here, or any other teacher of the people, if we do not bring forth things new and old out of the Gospel to give the saints their portion of meat in due season. If we keep from the Lord’s servants, their portion, we shall be kept without our portion, or rather we shall have it, but it will be a portion of the most awful kind! This makes it solemn work for any of you who attempt to teach others. God grant that you may give forth a good portion! Give out the things that are new, that is the Gospel, which is always new—and give out the old things, the antiquities of everlasting love and electing Grace—bring them all forth in proportion lest you be found, at last, to have been unbelievers.

We will finish when we duly note one more point, namely this, that if you do diligently keep God’s Words and if it is the joy of your heart to live on them, feed upon them and defend them against all comers, you may take this as an evidence that you are one of the Lord’s people. Poor Job fell back upon that when he was in great distress. And at such seasons you may do the same. Job 23:8-10—“Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: on the left hand, where He does work, but I cannot behold Him: He hides Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him: but He knows the way that I take: when He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”

And why? “My foot has held His steps, His way have I kept, and not declined. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of His lips; I have esteemed the Words of His month more than my necessary food,” or, “my portion,” as many translate it. The Words of God were dear to him! He felt he had kept them and, therefore, he said, “He knows the way that I take: when He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” If you trifle with God’s Words you will miss a great evidence of being His child!

Unless you are very strict as to what you believe and what you do. Unless you make the Word of God to be the chart by which you steer your course when you come into stormy waters and the devil begins to tempt you and the world laughs at you, you will not be able to fall back upon the evidence which Job could so honestly quote in his own favor. And neither will you have the sweet confidence that when the Lord has tried you, He will bring you forth as gold. The Lord bless you, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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THINKING AND TURNING  
NO. 1181

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JULY 5, 1874, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Your testimonies” Psalm 119:59.**

ALMOST every phase of spiritual life is depicted in the Psalms, but we shall not always find in them the interpretation of those deep exercises of soul with which the Believer grows familiar. We must look to the New Testament for full discourses upon the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, upon the conflicting forces of Divine Grace, depraved nature and for the other causes which produce the mysterious experience of the Christian. In the Old Testament we get the facts—in the New Testament we find the explanation of the facts. The statement of David, which is now before us, doubtless sets forth the experience of many here present in this assembly—“I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Your testimonies.”

The Spirit’s operation in the heart is apt to produce thoughtfulness, and through thoughtfulness to effect conversion in the sinner. In the case of the Believer, a restoration to the joy of salvation comes of like salutary reflections upon the negligence of one’s life. Repentance originates in thinking upon our ways. It proceeds to compare them with God’s precepts and faith prompts us to revert to the way of God’s testimonies. I understand our text to be a brief but complete account of the conversion of the sinner and of the restoration of the backslidden child of God. I hope that many of us, looking back to the time of our conversion, can use the words as our own and oh, how many times since, if we have, in any measure or degree, departed from our right state with regard to our heavenly Father, have we had occasion to resort to the means suggested here—“I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto your testimonies”?

The case stands thus. We are going on in the profession of a Christian life with little or no soul trouble. Temporal things are easy with us. By degrees we become unwatchful and the world steals into our hearts till the love of it creeps over us. We still pursue the even tenor of our way, unconscious of the dangers that threaten us, or the condition to which we have gradually descended. By-and-by discoveries startle us—we find ourselves unfit for the fellowship we once enjoyed. We lose our power in prayer. The duty which once was pleasant becomes irksome. All the symptoms point to serious derangement. This pulls us straight up. We look about us. We ask in sad perplexity—“Where am I? How did I get here? Am I a child of God? How, then, can I have lost my former strength and happiness?”

Thus we begin to deliberate. We survey our course during the last few months and we soon detect many sorrowful omissions of duty and, perhaps, even commissions of sin, till the Grace of God which is in us prompts us to seek the shortest way back to our right position. We have wandered into By-Path Meadow and at the sight of Giant Despair’s castle we endeavor to retrace our steps. The mariner has been gaily sailing on a smooth sea and he has given no heed to his bearings. All of a sudden he sees a rock ahead—from this he ought to have been far away—at that sight he shortens sail, looks about him and in consequence of what he sees changes his course, sets a better watch, and is restless until once more he reaches the old familiar channel.

Fellow voyager on the sea of life, may not this be your case or mine? It is very likely that at this moment some of us, if enabled by God’s Spirit to think upon our ways, may be led to pause and ponder our bearings. Thus by God’s infinite mercy our course in life may be changed and our character may be altered for the better, so we may once more return to our rest. I pray that if we have never known the Savior at all we may become His disciples today. Perhaps a single solemn thought lodged in your breast shall become the means of your conversion. God grant it may be so! This very day may some have to say, “At that time I thought upon my ways, and I turned my feet unto God’s testimonies.”

Two things will engage our attention this morning—a consideration and a consequence. The first is right thinking and the next is right turning. “I thought” and, “I turned.” The two things go together.

I. Our first point is RIGHT THINKING—“I thought on my ways.” That

 this thought upon his ways caused him dissatisfaction is evident, or otherwise he would not have turned. If in reviewing my ways I find that they are all as God would have them, let me “go on.” It may be well, in such a case, to quicken one’s pace. Certainly it would be unwise to turn. So, then, it is clear that the right thinking of the text is a thinking which suggests dissatisfaction. Let your own reflections flow just now, I pray you, in this channel. Think of the days of your youth, of the time before you were born unto God. Or, if you are not converted, consider your whole life.

You are God’s creature and yet you have rendered to Him no obedience! You would not keep a horse or a dog that did not do you some service, or follow at your whistle. But God has made you and kept you alive and yet, up to now, He has not been in all, or, perhaps, in any of your thoughts. You have been an unprofitable servant. You are like a fruitless tree planted in good soil. Is this as it should be? Do you feel any comfort in such a retrospect? I am sure, if you ponder it fairly, and judge righteous judgment, you will be very disappointed. Must you not say to yourself, “This will not do”? If you are converted, in looking back upon your unconverted days you will say, “Of all this I am now ashamed! What fruit did I have of those pursuits in which I served myself, sought my own pleasures, reveled in my lusts and made my belly my God—living for the world instead of loving my Creator and Benefactor?

Consider your ways, O you who have never yet sought forgiveness. Would God that you might come to yourselves, and so track the course of your sins, that the tear of penitence might be distilled from your heart and begin to bedew your eyes. Were it so, I know that before long you would say, “I will arise and go to my Father, and I will say unto Him, Father, I have sinned.” An unconverted state is an unhappy state. An unforgiven sinner is in constant peril. Even if the unsaved one should obtain the greatest success in business, the largest accumulation of wealth, the highest honors of fame and the loftiest degree of rank, he would remain a pitiable object because unblest of God. Such a soul in wretched unquietness walks through dry places seeking rest and finding none. Till it comes home to its God, peace and prosperity it cannot know. May God in His infinite mercy lead unconverted men to review their ways and forsake them.

But, my Brothers and Sisters, if we think upon our ways since our new birth, we have little cause to be content with them. Think of the best things you have ever done. Does the flush of self-congratulation color your cheek? So far as I am concerned, far from me is every thought of glorying in anything which I have done for my Lord. Upon no sermon I have ever preached, though God knows I have preached my very soul out, am I able to look back without a measure of shame and confusion. I know I have preached the Gospel, but the manner of my preaching does not satisfy me. I would gladly wash every discourse in the tears of repentance, for in each one there are faults and failures that betray the weakness of a man, the infirmity of a creature, the unprofitableness of a servant.

No deed of charity or act of devotion that I ever performed can I look back upon with unmixed feelings. I wish that my best had been a thousand times better and had not been so sadly spoiled, as it often has been, by unbelief at the outset, or pride at the end, or by flagging zeal in the middle. This confession is no insincere regret, or a spurious attempt to appear humble—I mean what I say—and I believe that in the like confession the most devout of men would most heartily concur. The sins of our holy things—how grievous they are! It is only because our consciences are so blind that we do not shudder at the sight of them. Do you ever think you have done well? In that very thinking you have done ill. When I hear any of my Brethren talk of being perfect, I wonder what they mean!

Do they use the English language? Do they know themselves or their God? In perfect ignorance they surely must be held captive! As to their own nature and its workings, they can have no knowledge, or else such boastful expressions could not come from their lips. Brethren, the saints are still sinners! Our best tears need to be wept over, the strongest faith is mixed with unbelief! Our most flaming love is cold and chill compared with what Jesus deserves and our most intense zeal still lacks the full fervor which the bleeding wounds and pierced heart of the Crucified might

claim at our hands. Our best things need a sin offering, or they would condemn us!

As for our worst things—come, think of them! Remember your failures, your transgressions and your provocations. Blush as you recall the times when the curb has been taken from your temper and anger has flashed forth in flames of fire though you had hoped that all your passions had been subdued! Remember those times of levity, when, free from all restraints, your tongue has not spoken to edification or even within the bounds of propriety? Can we bear to think of hours when we have been tempted by avarice to withhold that which we ought to have given, or when we have given out of the pride which we fondly thought had died out of our blood-washed hearts? Have you not felt sluggish in the Lord’s work? Have you not, like Jonah, in your peevishness and irritability been ready to flee from His face and forsake His calling?

Have there not been seasons when you have gone into your chamber and shut the door and wept because of your folly—and half wished never to rise from your knees again? Have you not said, “Ah me, that ever I should be such a brute beast as this”? Truly had you not been proud and self-conceited you would not have been surprised to find yourself so like a beast, as indeed you are. Do you recoil at my language and account it far too harsh? I am using Scriptural language, David’s own words are—“So foolish was I, and ignorant, I was as a beast before You; nevertheless I am continually with You; You hold me by my right hand.” What a strange medley are we of the diabolical and the Divine, the sinful and the heavenly—so sadly wedded to the earth—and yet so gloriously born from Heaven.

If you look at your worst side, I am sure, Beloved, you will abhor yourself and lie in the very dust before the Lord. You will not doubt the cleansing power of Jesus’ blood, but you will be filled with holy wonder that it should have availed to cleanse such sins as yours! Come, my Brothers and Sisters, bow yourself in self-abasement, follow in this examination and take stock of your ways since you have known the Lord. How have you behaved yourself in your poverty? Did your heart repine? Were you envious of the foolish? Did it seem to you that God’s Providence was harsh while your lot was hard? And how did you act in your wealth? Did you have a deep solicitude to render unto the Lord according to all that He had done for you? Or did you count your cash and grudge your tithes?

Was your hand closed to your kinsman in his adversity because you would rival your neighbor in his extravagance? How went it with you in your sickness? Were you patient on the bed of languishing? Did you kiss the hand that smote you and minister to those that waited on you? How went it with you in your health? Did you consecrate your strength wholly unto your Lord? How was it with you in your honor? Could you lay your crown at His feet? How was it with you in your shame? Did you glory in being despised for Christ’s sake? How has it been with you in private and how in public? How have you comported yourself on your knees and with the sacred Book open before you? What progress have you made in the knowledge of God’s will?

How have you behaved yourself in your house and how do your children speak of you? What opinion has your servant formed of your conduct? How have you acted towards sinners? Did you ever wet your pillow with tears for them? You sees them going down to Hell by the millions— did your heart never break while you were interceding for them? Come, the retrospection is painful, and I have marked out lines enough if you choose to follow them. Surely there is no room for boasting, but much need of turning. The very best man among us ought to be far better! The best man is but a man at his best. Lord, what is man? What is man that You are mindful of Him? It will be wise to think of our ways in the light of God’s Law, that mirror perfect holiness. How far short do we come of the Divine requirements? Think of them, also, in the light of God’s favor— what innumerable good things we have received from the Lord’s hands!

Have our returns been at all commensurate? Think of your life in the light of the Cross. You have sinned in the Presence of your crucified Lord. Have you been dead, indeed, unto sin? Think of your life in view of your risen Savior. Have you been alive to righteousness? Are you not ashamed? Think of your life in the light of the Day of Judgment and the coming of the Lord from Heaven. How will your actions appear in the light of the tremendous day? How will they weigh in the Infallible balances of unerring Justice? Truly, as we think of our ways, we sit humbled before the Lord and boasting is excluded!

This right thinking upon our ways will suggest a practical change. When we have erred in the past, it is certain that we have been losers thereby. We have been greatly injured by sin and if we are now in a sinful condition, will not a worse thing happen to us? If I am an unconverted man, what will become of me before long? God is already angry with me, for He is angry with the wicked every day. What will that anger lead to? What must be the end of a life that is unprofitable to God? What must be the eternal future of one who has resisted the Gospel, disobeyed God and neglected Him in all ways? Am I a child of God? The tendency of sin must be fearfully injurious to me! It must pierce me through with many sorrows. And if I am now out of order with God in some degree, how much further may this disorder go?

What if I should make shipwreck of my profession? What if I should grievously transgress and have to go the rest of my journey with broken bones? What if it should be declared in my ears by the Lord of Hosts, surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you till you die? My Soul, sin, even now, has not profited you while it is in the bud—what will it be when it ripens and its scattered seeds fly over the whole of my being—and turn

that which should be a fruitful field into a tangled mass of weeds? Surely it is time for a change!

There may be some few saints among you who do not need much changing, who have gone on so well that you may pray to continue as you are. But I am not one of such, myself. I am afraid that there are few who are. I pine for something better, I pant to rise higher, to climb nearer my God, to love Him more, to serve Him better and to be more fully consecrated to Him. A retrospect of our ways suggests the need of a practical alteration, not merely of planning or resolving, but of practically amending our course. “I thought upon my ways,” says David, “and I turned myself unto Your testimonies.” That is to say, He really did leave the old trail and follow the better track. He rose from coldness into fervor, from neglect of prayer into intense pleadings! He left the faulty for the more excellent way.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, the retrospect we take of our life should suggest that any turn we make should be God-ward—“I turned my steps unto Your testimonies.” It is no use turning if you do not turn to something better! There are certain people about who are always shifting—they hear some new dogma and that is the thing—straightway they are all agog for that. Tomorrow they will meet with some other new theory and straightway they will be mad in pursuit of it. They remind me of Luther’s expression, when he says, “There are certain people who, the moment they see a heresy, stare at it like a cow at a new gate.” They look and look and look again at the new thing as if it must be wonderful because it is new! The cow, at length, sees enough of the new gate, and goes back to her grass, but these people still stand staring, and another new frivolity bewitches them as soon as the former nine days’ wonder has grown stale. If I turn, God grant I may turn from good to better, or else it is ill to turn at all!

The best turn in the world is when a man turns to God. Such an one turns with purpose of heart. “Now,” he says, “I will follow the Word to the very letter. I will yield to the Spirit—His every monition shall be law to me. I will live with Jesus—and my spirit, soul and body shall be dedicated to Him.” Such a holy resolve is greatly needed nowadays. The divisions of Churches would be healed, the errors of the times would die out, the lukewarmness of this present age would pass away if once sinners were turned to God’s testimonies and saints were more fully turned to them, also. Thus right thinking about our ways suggests that we ought to be dissatisfied. It suggests a turning, suggests a turning to God, but it also suggests that such a turning is possible.

Many a man, in thinking upon his ways, contents himself—“Well, they are bad and they always will be bad,” and when a sinner once accepts that notion he will abide in his sin and go from worse to worse. I know of nothing which makes a man so grossly vicious as to be persuaded that virtue is impossible to him. “If I cannot repent, then I may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb and damned for much as little.” So the sinner feels and he advances in sin to its utmost degree. But, O Beloved, the right way of thinking of your ways is to remember that it is possible you still may turn unto God’s testimonies. No man’s case is hopeless! Every man’s condition would be hopeless apart from God and the precious blood, and the power of the Holy Spirit—but in connection with these, no man’s case, however habitually bad, is desperate—he may be changed—his feet may be turned to God’s testimonies.

You also, O Christian, may have fallen, today, into a very dull state. You may hardly know whether you have true godliness or not—religion may almost be a weariness to you. Ah, dear Soul, let not despair imprison you! You can yet turn your feet to God’s testimonies. By the power of the eternal Spirit you can be lifted out of your backsliding condition. As a child of God, you must not sit down and say, “I am delivered unto these corruptions and given over to the power of Satan.” The Son has made you free and free you are! Shake yourself from the dust, arise and sit down, O Jerusalem. Loose yourself from the bands of your neck, O captive daughter of Zion. You have been redeemed and you are no more a slave. Your chains are broken! Christ’s mighty hammer has beaten them to pieces upon the anvil of His Cross. “Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.” While the Lord lives and the eternal Spirit goes forth to save, there is yet hope of restoration.

This is very simple talk. I mean it to be simple. Yet I want it to be practical. Let me pause, here, and entreat every sinner to indulge the preacher with this favor—just now, for a few minutes, look upon your past life. Perhaps you have been so moral in your character and so amiable in your disposition that you can reflect on years past without blushing. But there is one thing that ought to fill you with shame. You have entirely failed to love, or trust, or serve God. Why should it be so? Is it right? Can you, in any way, make it consistent with honor that you should live as you do, wronging none but your God, saving all your injustice for Him? You are kind, yes, you are kind even to a dog—but not to your God! Tender towards the sick and the poor—to everyone but our dear Lord—who, on the bloody tree, revealed His love to men! Why this exception to the usual current of your life? Why is the good God singled out as the one Person to be treated with unkindness and injustice?

But, possibly, your life has not been pure. Gross deeds of sin have stained it. Well, I shall not recall these things—your memory will serve for that—and your own conscience will upbraid you. What I do suggest is that you should give enough thought to your ways at least to breathe some such prayer as this—“Lord, turn me and I shall be turned. May this be the hour in which I shall put away old things and enter upon a new life through Jesus Christ.” If any of you who are children of God have become gross backsliders, I would urge you to the same self-examination and selfaccusation. Think upon your ways with a stern censorship, a bitter penitence, a strong resolve. Take time and calmly deliberate. Sum up the evidence impartially in your own case. “For if we would judge ourselves we should not be judged. But when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.”

Christian people, you who are walking, in a measure, in fellowship with God, I press upon you, nevertheless, the same considerateness—not that there may be a reason for entire dissatisfaction—yet it is always wise to observe your conduct with scrupulous fidelity. Tradesmen generally give up attention to their books when things are out of sorts with them. They do not like their books, for their books do not like them. The man who does not like self-examination may be pretty certain that things need examining. Let us look diligently to our ways and may good come of it to the profit of our souls.

II. Secondly, our text treats of RIGHT TURNING, which grows out of right thinking. The turning of the text is thus described—“I turned my feet unto Your testimonies.” Here observe how complete this turn was. A man may turn his head and turn but little. He may turn his hand—there is not much movement of the whole body in that. But when he turns his feet, he turns himself completely! The turn we sinners all need is a whole turn. The nature must be changed. The things we love must no longer be the supreme objects of our affection. The pursuits of the world which were our idols must no longer be such. The things we have despised we must now esteem. Eternity, which seemed distant, must be brought near. Earthly things which ruled us must be put beneath our feet. There must be an entire revolution in our nature to make us right. The child of God, when he gets wrong, must come right away from everything which has misled him and follow the Lord fully, with purpose of heart.

The turning of the text is also a practical one. Whenever the foot or the hand is mentioned in Scripture, something practical is meant. “I turned my feet.” I did not merely say, “I turned my eyes,” but I showed the reality of the change of heart by change of life. It will not suffice for a sinner to say, “Oh, I am converted. I love Jesus Christ,” and then go to his business and cheat as he did before, or resort to his old habits and drink as freely as he did before, or keep company with his former associates and use profane language, as was his previous habit, or act as a worldling acts in following the lusts of the flesh and pursuing the vanities of the age. A change of life, alone, can prove a change of heart.

When the child of God gets out of order with the Lord, his change must be a practical change, too. He must not waste himself in regrets, but arouse himself to action. Let him immediately, “arise and go to his Father.” The Spirit of God must stir him to action! He must no longer sleep. He must procrastinate no more. There is vital energy and urgent haste in all positive reformation. It must be, moreover, a Scriptural turn, too. “I turned my feet unto Your testimonies.” There is a spurious conversion which is not true conversion to God. A man may have another heart and yet he may not have a new heart.

We read of King Saul that he had another heart, but he remained unsaved. A man may change his idols. He may change his sins, but may not be changed in heart. Drunks have become sober and renounced their intoxicating cups, which is, so far so good, but they have presently become intoxicated with a conceit of their own virtue and extolled themselves as models of purity. Ah, then, it is a poor gain to change drunkenness for self-righteousness! Both sins are deadly. A man may as easily go to Hell by trusting in himself as by resigning himself to a besetting vice. Hell has many gates, though Heaven has but one. We must experience the change, which is according to the Word of God, and so the text says, “I turned my feet unto Your testimonies,” that is, to believe what God has revealed, to accept what God presents, to do what God commands and to be what God would have us to be. May God give us to experience within and to manifest without such a radical turn as that!

The Truth of God I want to bring out most prominently is this—the turning was immediate. “I thought on my ways”—well, what then?—“I turned my feet,” directly, immediately. And can this be so? Can the Ethiopian change his skin and the leopard his spots? Can the sinner immediately be made a saint? Can the saint who has backslidden be at once restored? Can I, who come into the House of God dull and dead, suddenly brighten up and become full of light and life and joy? Well, the text puts it so. “I thought upon my ways, and turned my feet unto Your testimonies.” Indeed, it is so! But mark you, if it is so, it must be a Divine work. David does not tell us this in so many words, but the testimonies to which David refer are clear and conclusive on the point.

To take a man and put him through a long process, as some do, of Law-work and repentance, and so set before him gradual enlightenment and assurance of faith as a distant result—well, I do not see so much to marvel at as a Divine operation in that sort of renovation! But to take a man right away from his former self and save him then and there is certainly the work of God! Zacchaeus is up in the tree. Jesus bids him, “Come down.” Down he comes! His heart is changed immediately! Salvation has come to him and he at once makes and pays the vows that prove his sincerity—that is surely Divine!

Yonder is a person, who, through a long course of experiences and performances has gradually attained to the belief that he is a Christian. I hope he is so, but I am not his judge. But here is a man, a jailer, who has been putting his prisoners’ feet fast in the stocks. He is cruel, hard, wicked—an old soldier used to war—with no tenderness in him. In the middle of the night there comes an earthquake and he holds his sword to his breast to kill himself because he fears the prisoners have escaped. A voice cries to him, “Do yourself no harm,” and he inquires, “Sirs, what

must I do to be saved?” Within half an hour that man becomes a Christian, a Baptist and a saved man!

The Lord did that, I am sure. But does He work in that manner now? Are not these the exceptions? No, they are the rule! How do I know that? There was a man once who hated the Church of Christ so bitterly that he meant to cut it up, root and branch. Riding on his horse to Damascus with warrants to put to death all the saints in Damascus, all of a sudden he saw a bright light. He was struck down off his horse and in a few minutes he was lying down prostrate at Jesus’ feet, a penitent! That is God’s work! It must be and this is still how He works. But does He work ordinarily as He did in the Apostle? Hear Paul’s words. “In me, first, did God show forth all long-suffering for a pattern.” If a thing is a pattern, the intention is to produce other articles like it. The original is—“For a typos, or a type.” Paul’s conversion was a typical or representative conversion.

There may be conversions which are not of that type, but many will be according to that pattern. Indeed, to speak the full Truth of God, every conversion must, in a sense, be sudden. The actual point of the conversion is instantaneous! I am walking through the woods and I am going the wrong direction. Well, I pause and look about, but whenever I actually turn to go the correct way, there is a critical moment when I turn, is there not? It may be that I take some time to consider and look about me—but when I do actually go back, there is a particular moment when I turn and take the first step. I desire that this present moment may be the instant of conversion to each one of you who are dead in sin. You have been thinking of your ways—now may you turn your feet to His testimonies! This must be the work of Divine Grace. The Omnipotent power of God must turn you to Himself.

This leads me to observe that it must be by faith because a man cannot be altogether changed in a moment by works. If works had a changing power—which they have not, since the fruit cannot change the root and no number of bushels of figs could turn a nettle into a fig tree—the man must have time to do the works, whereas time is not an element here. It is “I thought,” and, “I turned,” and, therefore, it must be by faith. Many a sinner has been, for years, desiring a change which he would find in one moment if he did but believe in Jesus. He has been praying, reading, repenting and I do not know what besides, trying to find salvation—whereas the Savior has found it for him! Let him but look to Jesus and simply trust in Him—he will be saved in a moment, he will be a renewed man and he will be able to say, in the language of the text—“I thought upon my ways and turned unto Your testimonies.” I would drive home this point, but my time fails me. May God the Eternal Spirit bring many to God’s testimonies at this very moment!

I have these closing words to the child of God—are you, this morning, in a sad, sorrowful, unholy condition? Do you desire to get out of it? Then, my Brothers and Sisters, arise, for Jesus calls you. “But I cannot,” you say. You cannot, I grant you that, for without Jesus you can do nothing! But I am not talking about what you can do. I would remind you that there is no reason why you should not ascend into a noble condition at once. Are you not still one with Jesus? Despite the state into which you have fallen, you are still a member of His body. Who can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord? In Him all fullness dwells—why should you pine in poverty? You are naked, poor and miserable in yourself, but all things are yours!

Come, Brothers and Sisters, these things are to be had for the asking! God waits to give these things to you, why not enjoy them? “Oh, but I have strayed so far from God and have fallen into such a state.” Has the Spirit of God weakened? Cannot He raise you out of your sad state? What condition were you in when you were converted? You were dead, yet He quickened you. You are not dead now, there is some life in you, though that life is sickly. Which is easier, to make the sick man whole, or to make the dead man live? He has done the greater—He can certainly do the lesser! “But can He do it at once?” Did He not regenerate you at once? Was there not but a moment in which you passed from death to life? Well, at this moment you can pass from a state of sickness into one of spiritual health!

“But how?” Why, by the same way in which you passed into spiritual life at first, namely, by an act of faith! Come to the Cross again, my dear Brother, my dear Sister. Wipe those eyes of yours. Jesus died for sinners! Come away, just as you are, just as you came at first—and though your life is blotted with sins and your evidences blighted—your comforts shall come again. Why do you hesitate? Thus says the Lord, “I have blotted out like a cloud your transgressions, and like a thick cloud your sins.” “Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as wool; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as snow.” Why do you need so much persuasion to bring you to the heart which bled for you? Married to Christ, and yet ashamed to come to your Husband? A member of His body, and yet afraid to approach your Head?

Come along, Brothers and Sisters, the Lord lives and His heart moves with compassion towards you! He loves you! He will love you! He must love you. Though you have sinned, He cannot change. Though you believe not, He abides faithful. “He hates putting away.” Your transgressions have separated you, for a while, from your God, but listen to this—“The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed, says the Lord who has mercy on you.” “For a small moment have I forsaken you; but with great mercies will I gather you. In a little wrath I hid My face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy

on you, says the Lord your Redeemer.” Come back, then, child of God, and in an instant your soul shall be restored!

And you, poor Sinner, the same is true for you. Do not fancy that you need remain any longer in your lost condition. Do not say, “I will go home to pray for a blessing,” but believe in Jesus even now, for He is able, now, to change your heart! He is, now, able to give you peace, now to press you to His bosom! Young woman, you are like Lydia when she went, that morning, to the Prayer Meeting by the river. She did not think to find Jesus, but the Lord, who opened her heart, sent Paul to speak to her and Lydia went home a convert—and why shouldn’t you? And you, young man of business, a money-taker like Matthew, who sat at the receipt of customs—remember Jesus said, “Follow Me,” and Matthew did not stop a moment, but followed Jesus at His call.

May the same happen to you today! You were not a disciple of Christ yesterday, but when you go to business tomorrow they will soon find out that you are a new man, and this will be the happy day for you, the day of your turning to God! If it is so, they will hear about it in Heaven, and there will be joy in the presence of the angels of God over one who thought upon his ways and turned his feet unto God’s testimonies! The Lord bless you, every one of you, for His name’s sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 119:49-72.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—104, 424, 605.  
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A CLEAR CONSCIENCE  
NO. 1443

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

**“Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your commandments.”  
Psalm 119:6.**

ANY attempt to keep the Law of God with the view of being saved thereby is sure to end in failure. So contrary is it to the express warnings of the Divine Lawgiver and so much does it run counter to the whole Gospel, that he who ventures to seek justification by his own merits ought to be ashamed of his presumption. When God tells us that salvation is not by the works of the Law, are you not ashamed of trying to procure it by your obedience to its precepts? When He declares that by the works of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight, are you not ashamed to go and seek after justification where He tells you it never can be found? When He, over and over again, declares that salvation is by faith and that it is a matter of Grace to be

 received, do you not blush for yourself that you should give the lie to God and propound a righteousness of your own conceit in which you have vainly tried to keep up a respectable appearance, screening the palpable delinquencies of your life under a thin veil of piety toward God and charity toward men?

Eternal life is not to be earned by any trade you can carry on in works of the flesh because, however estimable in the opinion of men, they are simply vile in the sight of God! If a man seeks to keep the Commandments of God in order that he may attain eternal life, he will be ashamed and confounded. He had better at once renounce the folly of attempting so insane, so futile, so impossible a task as that of defending his own cause and justifying his own soul! But when a man is converted; when he has believed in Christ Jesus to the salvation of his soul; when he is justified by faith and his sin is blotted out—when he has obtained mercy, found Grace in the eyes of the Lord and entered into the rest of faith because he knows that he is a saved man—then in keeping the precepts of the Law he will gratify a strong inclination. In fact, it henceforth becomes his highest ambition to be obedient—and the great delight of his soul is to run in the ways of God’s Commandments out of gratitude for the great benefits he has received.

And let it never be imagined that because Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, there is, therefore, a complete removal of all moral constraints and restraints from Christian men! We are not under the Law, but under Grace, yet are we not lawless and libertine since we have become servants of God and followers of Christ. No, but we are under another Law—a Law of another sort which works upon us after another

fashion. What if a man says, “I am free from the police, the magistrate, the judge and the executioner”? Does it, therefore, follow that he is free from the rules of his father’s house? Assuredly not! The child may be quite clear of the police court, but there is a rod at home. There is a father’s smile; there is a father’s frown. And though Christians shall never be so punished for their sins that they can come under condemnation, seeing they are delivered from that evil calamity by Christ, yet being children of God they come under another discipline—the discipline of His house and home—a discipline of chastisements not at all of a legal caste, for, however bitter the suffering it often entails, though He cause grief, He will have compassion.

The rebukes are sharp, but the retribution is not vindictive and the Lord is known to smile with approbation, to speak with commendation and to bestow His compensations with liberal hands on those who seek His face, listen to His voice and do His bidding. When He has committed to us some service which He only could qualify us to discharge, He has often caused us to partake of the fruits in abundant joy. Now, I shall endeavor to bring out this principle while I am speaking upon our text. Those who are children of God should seek after universal obedience to the Divine Commands. They should have respect unto all the Lord’s Commandments. If they do so, they will have a full requital and this is the reward. “Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your commandments.” Two things, then, claim our attention—the universality of believing obedience and the excellence of its result.

I. THE UNIVERSALITY OF BELIEVING OBEDIENCE is here highly commended. The esteem in which we hold and the tribute we pay to all God’s Commandments is spoken of. Not some of His Commandments, but all of them. Not picking and choosing—paying attention to this because it pleases me and omitting that because it is not equally pleasurable—but the careful, earnest respecting of all the statutes of God and the anxious endeavor to keep them all! This it is which challenges attention and therein is great blessedness. Turn to the Psalm, itself, which is far preferable to any reflections we could offer, inasmuch as the Word of God must ever excel the word of man. There David says, “ Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the Law of the Lord.”

Comes this blessedness simply on those who are in the way, irrespective of their walk and conversation? No, but let them take heed lest they step aside and put their foot into the puddle and stain their garments. The persons who are truly blessed are the undefiled who so watch their walk that they endeavor, in everything, to adorn the doctrine of God, their Savior, and in nothing to grieve the Spirit of God! There lies the blessedness, not in partial obedience, but in perfect obedience as far as it can be attained! Not now and then, but ever and always! Not in some things, but in all things, as far as we are taught of the living God. The only way to avoid defilement is to have respect and pay deference to all the Commandments of the Lord.

Whether we observe it or not, there is never an omission of duty or a commission of fault that does not cast a stain upon the purity of conscience and the integrity of character. Would you wish to be spotted from head to foot, Believer? I know you would not! If you would be blest, you must be undefiled—and if you would be undefiled, there must be a universality about your obedience—walking in all the Commandments of the Lord. To enjoy this beatitude, a holy walking must become habitual. This sacred exercise is very different from sluggish piety. “Blessed are the undefiled in the way who walk in the Law of the Lord.” A man may sit down in the road without soiling his skin or fouling his apparel, but that is not enough. There must be progress—practical action in the Christian life! And in order to blessedness we must be doing something for the Master!

Slothfulness is not the way to blessedness! Nor can we serve the Lord in this active work unless we labor in all things to mind His will and walk according to His way. God is to be sought diligently by sincere souls. “Blessed are they that keep His testimonies and that seek Him with the whole heart.” Now, you cannot keep the testimonies and know the doctrine unless you have the will in full force and vigorous energy. It seems to be almost as inevitable as a Law of Nature that a man who is not sound in his life cannot be sound in his judgment. Wisdom will not long hold a seat in the head of that man who has yielded up his heart to folly. A pure theology and a loose morality will never blend. We have known men who thought themselves mightily orthodox, indulge in many unseemly and profligate habits. In fact, they have made light of their own sins—and that boasted orthodoxy of theirs presently develops into some pernicious fallacy!

Be assured of it, you cannot claim the promises unless you are willing to keep the precepts. Vaunt as you may your knowledge of the letter of the Scriptures, you shall fail to be owned of God as His witnesses unless there is the witness of the life as well as the witness of the lips! And how can the witness of the life be sincere unless we strive in all things to keep the statutes of the Lord? How can we be said to serve Him with our whole heart if part of our heart goes after vanity—if we hug some favorite sin or if we leave some known duty in abeyance, saying—“When we have a more convenient season we will attend to that.” No, the blessedness is to the undefiled! The blessedness is to the walkers in the way! The blessedness is to the keepers of the Divine Laws. The blessedness is to those that seek the Lord with their whole heart.

So, you see, you must take care to have respect unto all the Commandments if you are to get the blessedness of the Christian life. If you will carefully notice the fourth verse of this Psalm, you will see that this keeping of all the Commandments is, itself, a positive command of God— “You have commanded us to keep Your precepts diligently.” That is enough guarantee for a Christian—“You have commanded.” Now, the command of God to His people is not, “You shall keep some of My commands and walk in a measure according to My mind and after My will.” What father is there who will say to his children, “You must sometimes obey me. The rule of my house is that you may use your own discretion and follow your own inclination as to which of my injunctions you obey and which you neglect. You can have your own way at times if you will but occasionally yield to me in a few things”?

Such a father would be quite unworthy to be at the head of any household! Certainly our heavenly Father is not thus lax in His discipline. He has spoken to His children in tones of love. The Law of His mouth has been given as a light to illuminate our path and as a lamp to guide our feet. So palpable, then, is the Divine Benevolence, that the more imperious His voice, the more interested we must be in heeding it. Does He say—“You shall keep My statutes and observe My ordinances”?—doubt not for an instant that there is much profit in following the instructions closely and great peril in disregarding them! And inasmuch as the authority of God goes with each command—with one precept as well as another—therefore should it be the objective of the Christian that he should keep all the commands! He should make no choice, or selection, as to the words of the Lord, but take them all and pray the Lord to bring him into conformity with every one of them.

That this is a meet and proper subject of prayer becomes very obvious, for in the next verse the Psalmist exclaims, “Oh that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes!” Now, no man, I think, ever prayed God to grant him partial obedience. Did he ever pray—dare he ever pray, “O Lord, help me to overcome some of my sins, but not all! This day preserve me from some temptations, but allow me to indulge some of my propensities”? Did you ever pray, “O Lord, keep me, I pray You, from great and open sins, but permit me, in Your infinite mercy, to enjoy certain private sins that I am exceedingly fond of”? Such a prayer were worthier of a worshipper of Satan than of a worshipper of God! No, our heart renewed by Grace craves to be perfectly set free from sin! We have not obtained it—we are pressing on towards it—but this, even now, is our desire and our prayer. Hence you cannot wonder that in the text the believing man is spoken of as having respect unto all God’s Commandments, since, if it is a matter of prayer, it cannot be in respect to

 some of God’s Commandments, but he must pray that he may have respect to every one of them.

Now, I want to come a little closer to details. What do we mean by having respect to all God’s Commandments? I reply that whatever there is that the Lord has spoken in any part of His Word, we desire to hold in devout esteem and to have respect to every utterance of His will. The Law, as He gave it to Moses, is no longer, to us, the way of obtaining life, but it is still, in the hands of Christ, a most blessed rule of living. It is divided into two tablets and our prayer is that we should keep them both and reverently observe them, that towards God our life should always be obedient, truthful, adoring. We pray that we should have respect unto Him in all our ways; that we should lean upon Him; that we should depend upon Him; that we should serve Him and devote ourselves wholly to Him. To seek His Glory, first and foremost, is the chief end of our being. We must not forget this.

But then there follow six Commandments upon the other stone which relate to men—and we must mind them—for it were a poor thing to say, “I am devout towards God, but I care not to be just towards men.” A devout thief would be a strange anomaly! An adoring murderer were a singular incongruity! A disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ indulging in covetousness is a self-evident contradiction! No, he that loves God must love his neighbor as himself and I trust our desire is that we may not fail in obedience to either of these tablets, but may, by the work of the Holy Spirit in us, be worked into an uprightness of conversation and character, both towards God and towards men. Some commands of God are highly spiritual, while others may be described rather as moral. Surely, to trust God is one of the grand commands. “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved” is a precept which we would never wittingly neglect.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not to your own understanding.” “Cast your care on Him.” “Draw near unto Him.” All such spiritual exhortations as these relate to the life of the quickened Believer. God has forbidden us to disregard, to despise, or to disparage any of them. Oh that we may abound in all the Graces of the Spirit and be diligent in all the acts of our spiritual life! But we must not, therefore, forget or be negligent concerning morals, which some have accounted to be minor obligations! They pretend to abound in prayer, but are positively slothful in business. They are content to wait, but not to work. They say that they are serving at the altar, but we see that they are indolent enough in the shop. Christian men who stand up for the Truth of God should take care not to be lax in their conduct when they are so wonderfully strict in their creed.

Do not trifle with truth in speaking to your fellow man while you insist on respecting the Truth of God. Can anything be more despicable than the priests who prate much about the faithfulness of God’s promises but are not very particular about keeping their own promises? They say that they will let you have an article home on Friday night and you do not get it till the following Wednesday—that is telling a falsehood. If you saw yourselves as others see you, though you might account yourselves spiritually true, you would know for certain that you were morally false! Little duties are almost too insignificant for such high-flying spiritual professors. They are such that can pray at a Prayer Meeting, therefore they need not do an honest day’s work for an honest day’s wage!

On the other hand, they can oppress the laborer in his wages because they mean to give a donation to the hospital! It will not do! In vain you pretend to be spiritual and attend to spiritual duties, while you ignore the commonplace morals! Depend upon it—if you are not moral, you are not a disciple of Christ! It is all nonsense about your experience. If you occasionally get drunk, or if you now and then let out an oath, or if, in your

business you would make twice two into five or three, according as your profit happens to run—why, man, do not talk about being a Christian! Christ has nothing to do with you—at least no more to do with you than He had to do with Judas Iscariot! You are very much in the same position. “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” If without holiness, then much more without morality can no man expect to see the face of God with acceptance!

But, as true Believers in our Lord, we hope that He will enable us to have respect unto all God’s Commandments. Some Commandments specially concern the Church. Every Christian should endeavor to discharge his duties towards his fellow Christians. There are also duties connected with the family and every Christian should see that he does not let one of these kill the other. I once knew a man—I cannot tell you whether he is alive at this present moment—I knew him well. He used to go out into the villages with all the local preachers. He was a constant attendant at Prayer Meetings—in fact, you never went to a public service connected with the Church without seeing him—and he was out at tract society and missionary anniversaries and every gathering of the sort. The only place where you never found him was at home with his boys.

I had the misery to teach one of his boys. That boy died in drunkenness before he had reached the age of manhood. Others of his sons were the pests of the town in which he lived. That man was eminently good in certain respects—doing a great deal for other people’s families—but nothing for his own. Now, that will not do, Brothers and Sisters. That will never do! We must never bring to God, as a sacrifice, a duty smeared with the blood of another duty! That were an abomination! There is a balance and a proportion to be observed. “Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your commandments.” The works of the Christian life may be divided, if you like, into public and private. How zealous some individuals are in the discharge of public work! Anything that will be seen of men shall have their closest attention!

But how about private work? We attend the Prayer Meeting, but do we forsake the closet? We hear sermons, but do we read our Bibles alone? We attend public meetings, but do we have private communion with God? O Beloved, there are two sets of duties—the outward and the inward. What, though to outward observation we walk uprightly before God and there is nothing about us that the human eye can detect as wrong, yet if the heart is not pure—if though the outside of the platter is washed, the inside is full of filthiness, how far we are from perfection! These reflections ought to cause a world of self-examination while I press home the crucial words— “Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your commandments”—those Divine injunctions which concern the secret inward life as well as those which have to do with our more outward and public carriage. We sometimes divide Christian duties into greater and smaller. Of course they are all great—none are small except in their bearing upon others even though some things appear to have less relative magnitude.

Now, some people are remiss and careless about what they call petty, trivial matters, but the genuine lover of the Lord will show his love to his Master in bestowing much care upon little things. I know it is in a family the little things that bring discomfort and the little things that give pleasure. And I believe in the family of God those who give diligent heed to the little things of the Word usually bring much comfort to their fellow Christians and great glory to God. At the same time, there were Pharisees of old who strained out gnats from their drink, but swallowed camels by their immoralities. There were those who tithed mint and anise and cumin and yet neglected the weightier matters of the Law. This must never occur with us. We must endeavor to have such a careful walk that we would not go an inch astray—and yet it is idle to talk about going an inch astray when we give ourselves license for a mile or two of wandering every now and then! God grant we may have Grace to avoid small faults, while we strive to keep clear of great transgressions!

One other word I would like to say here. In the full sweep of our text there must be taken in duties unknown as well as known. “Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your commandments.” There may be some of God’s commands that you do not know. Study the Word of God in order that you may know them. “Well,” says one, “but I am excused if I do not know them.” Do you really think so? Because, if so, the more ignorant a man is, the safer he is from coming into condemnation, for, knowing little, he is under little obligation, according to such an estimation. But our understanding and knowledge are not the measure of our duty. The command of God is our sole standard! Conscience, itself, is not a trustworthy rule. If a man’s conscience is unenlightened, he may be sinning and reaping the ill consequences of his sin—not less surely because he is not conscious that his misfortunes are due to his folly rather than his fate! His conscience cannot be the standard. The standard is the Law of God.

Brothers and Sisters, I would not have you live in daily neglect of a Divine command which I am persuaded you would obey if you knew it. Hide not yourself behind a pillar, but come into the light and take the Word of God and read it and always ask that God would be pleased to open your eyes to anything there you have not seen before. You know you can wink very hard, sometimes, when you are reading the Bible. I should say that our friends in the Southern states of America, when they kept slaves, must have winked dreadfully hard when they were reading such a passage as this—“As you would that men should do to you, do you also unto them likewise.” And I could mention some other matters that concern English people that would require a frequent putting of the finger in the eye for fear too much light should come in. But be you not such! Seek to let the Word photograph itself upon your understanding and then, straightway, when you know the Divine will, labor to carry it out in all

particulars.

Thus have I tried to show the range of this text. But now notice that what is aimed at here is that the soul should pay respect unto all God’s Commandments—pay respect to them—love them, study them, value them and thus pay respect to them all. I do not know whether you catch my thought, for I am afraid that I am putting it rather awkwardly. The commands of God are proportionate to one another. When an architect is about to erect a large edifice, say a cathedral, he has to make the height of the various proportions relative to each other. He grasps an idea of what the general effect is to be, so he does not throw out all his strength upon the nave, or the transept, or the chancel, or the spire, but he tries to make each part of the magnificent pile assist and contribute to the general harmony of the entire structure.

Now, it ought to be so, also, with the Christian life. “Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your commandments”—to the foundation commandments, striving to dig deep. To the high soaring commandments—seeking to rise into the utmost fellowship with God. To those commandments that need stern labor, like the rugged walls upon which much toil must be spent and upon those which are a delight and a beauty, like the golden light windows that require fine taste and delicate skill. One would wish to do it all, to realize it all, to aim after a completeness of character so that we may be like the Lord Jesus Christ! Oh that we were enamored of this perfection and were seeking after it! It becomes us, dear Friends, who are believers in Christ, to set before us as our standard a perfect character and we should aim to reach it, looking to have the mind and will of God for that model.

That I may in all things do what God requires of me and abstain from everything which He forbids me should be the great objective of my life. Be it my firm resolve and my daily and hourly desire, that, by the power of His Spirit, I may attain this conformity to the Divine purpose. I should endeavor with constant maintained persistency to get nearer and nearer to this obedience to every Divine Commandment. Every failure should cost me sorrow. Every mistake should lead me to chasten myself with penitence. Every time I err I should go back to the blood and ask to be washed, that no defilement may remain upon me.

II. Having thus spoken upon this universal obedience, only a few minutes can be afforded for the reward, to wit—THE EXCELLENCY OF ITS RESULT, “Then shall I not be ashamed.” I suppose that means, first, that as sin is removed, shame is removed. Sin and shame came into this world together. Our first parents were naked and were not ashamed, but when, in another sense, they became naked, then they were ashamed. They had no sooner sinned against God than they were told that they were naked and they hid themselves from the Presence of the Most High. Unless sin gets to a high head, which it will not do in the Believer, shame is always sure to go with sin. Excessive sin or habitual transgression at last kills shame and gives a harlot’s forehead so that the hardened culprit knows not how to blush.

It is an awful thing when a man is no longer conscious of shame, but a still more awful thing when he comes to glory in his shame—for then his damnation is not far off! But as sin is cast out of the Believer, shame is cast out of him in proportion and it, therefore, comes to pass that courage rises with a consciousness of rectitude. The man that has respect unto God’s commands is no longer ashamed of men. He is not abashed by their scorn, or disconcerted by their ridicule. Let them say, “Oh, you are too precise,” we would be very foolish to take that as a reproach. I remember a man once contemptuously calling me John Bunyan as I went down the street. I took off my hat to him and felt rather flattered. I only wished I had been more like he! If anybody says to you, “Oh, you are a Methodist,” take the imputation kindly. It is a most respectable name. Some of the grandest men that ever lived were Methodists.

“Ah,” but they will say, “you are one of the Presbyterians.” Do not frown at the charge, but bow courteously, for some grand witnesses for Christ have belonged to that good fellowship. “Ah,” says the world, “you are one of those Puritans—you are one of those religious people.” Yes, but you are not ashamed of that! They might as well have said, “You are a man worth £50,000 a year.” Would you blush to admit it? I dare say you would like it to be true! When anybody says, “Ah, there is one of the saints,” ask him to prove his words! Tell him you only hope you will try to prove them yourself. There is nothing to be ashamed of in keeping God’s commands! Then, again, before men we shall not be ashamed of our profession. Well may some Christians be inclined to put their Christianity into the shade when they remember how little credit they do to it—but when a man has respect unto all God’s commands, he is not ashamed to say, “I am a Christian. Look me up and down and examine my conduct. I do not boast of it, but I know that I have sought honestly and sincerely to walk before God in righteousness.”

Or, when a false accusation is brought against you, meet it in the same spirit. Perhaps somebody will libel you. I will defy you to avoid it! If you were to live the life of the most irreproachable man of God you would not be safe from calumny! Was not God Himself slandered, even in Paradise, by the serpent? But you need not be ashamed when you can appeal to God and feel that in all things you have endeavored to keep His commands. Thrice is he armed that has his conscience clear. No armor of steel or mail can so well protect a man as to know that before God he has walked in guileless, blameless uprightness and sought to do before the Lord that which is well-pleasing in His sight. “Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your commandments.”

This may likewise refer to that inward shame we sometimes feel when we examine ourselves and pass our own conduct in review. Don’t you ever, when reading a promise, look upon it as a very sweet promise made to God’s children, though you hardly dare appropriate it to yourself? You feel ashamed. In fact, there are many gracious promises you never have

been able to accept as your own. You have been afraid to take them. They were too rich, too ripe, too luscious fruit for you to adventure upon tasting! You thought they were intended for the favored children, not for poor strangers like you. Now call to remembrance my text—“Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your commandments.” There are some delightful privileges of the Christian that you have never yet ventured to seek—some high doctrines that you have scarcely been able to believe. Dear Friend, have respect unto ALL His commandments, for, perhaps, your fear, your doubt, your hesitancy, your need of assurance may have arisen from your lack of a careful walk before God and when the Holy Spirit has enabled you to be holy, He will enable you, by full assurance, to grasp the rich things of the Covenant.

Now, may I not be speaking to some who have been ashamed of attempting their obvious duty? It is your duty to tell your experience, sometimes, to others, but have you not blushed at the very thought? I know why. It was because you thought of some inconsistency which, if they knew, would disparage your testimony and make you appear very faulty in their eyes. Ah, “Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your commandments.” You have not dared to address even the smallest congregation though you can speak very well upon secular topics. Why is that? Is it because your walk is not as close with God as it should be? “Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your commandments.”

Perhaps, my Brother, you may be a minister and yet you may almost falter in stating some grand doctrinal Truth of God. Why is that, Brother? Is there something at the back that I cannot guess—that I would not mention if I could—which weakens your testimony? Yet you will not be ashamed when you have respect unto all God’s commandments! How can we stand to admonish the unrighteous if we are not living righteous lives? How can we be able, like Nathan, to say, “You are the man,” if we are conscious that the person rebuked could turn round and point at our lives and say, “See what you do!” No, Brothers, the servants of God that are to have courage in doing duty for their Master must pray to be the undefiled in the way. They must walk in the Law of the Lord and though, at the very best, should they reach the highest point, they will still lie low before God and be humble in His Presence—yet they will not be ashamed when they can feel that they have, in all integrity, walked before the Lord and can say, like the Prophet of old, “Whose ox have I taken? Or whose ass have I taken? Or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed? Or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind my eyes? And I will restore it to you. Witness against me before the Lord and before His anointed.”

But if they could not impugn him, it gives the man Grace not to be ashamed. So will it be in the time of trial, too. I admire Job, notwithstanding the testiness he seemed to have, and I wonder who would not be testy when he was covered with boils from head to foot—yet it was a grand thing to be able to say, “O God, You know I am not wicked”—and he could appeal to the Eternal as his Vindicator because the charges brought against him were not true. He had not sinned against his God in the way in which they said. Though he was not perfect in his nature, yet he was pure in heart. He was sincere in his disposition and blameless in his outward carriage so that he could defy them to prove any of the insinuations that they hurled at his integrity. This helped him to triumph! It was the very backbone of his patience.

And what satisfaction will it supply when

 our course is reaching its close and we face the hour of our departure if no dark clouds hang over our retrospect of life! Let God’s Grace enable you and me to live godly lives—we shall find, then, our evidences clear! Though we shall not always rely upon any works of righteousness that we have achieved, or any character of holiness that we have acquired, but shall ever rest as much in Christ as we did when at first we cast our sinful souls on Him for mercy, yet it will be sweet to look back upon a life that has been spent in the service of God and to exchange this service below for the nobler service of His courts above!

And when our course is finished and we are gathered to our fathers, do you not think it will be well to leave an unclouded reputation behind? Did you ever notice the painful contrast between the record concerning one and another of the good kings of Judah? Take, for example, Amaziah and Hezekiah. Of Amaziah it is said, “He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, yet not like David, his father. Howbeit the high places were not taken away: as yet the people did sacrifice and burnt incense on the high places.” There was no such qualification to the tribute offered to Hezekiah’s memory. “He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that David, his father, did. He removed the high places and broke the images, and cut down the groves, and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan. He trusted in the Lord God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him.” So, Brothers and Sisters, I pray it may be with each and all of us, though we may not hold any such exalted position as the kings of Judah! Yet let it be our desire and our aim to be “sincere and without offense till the day of Christ.”

Once more, and I have done. “Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all Your commandments.” “Then I shall not be ashamed before God.” There is such a thing as a child of God being very much ashamed in the presence of his father. He does not doubt that he is a child, but he feels ashamed. Is it not so with your own children? They know that they are your children and they know that you love them, but, still, they are ashamed because they have been doing something which grieves you and so they do not seek your company. They get away from father. Father has looked very angrily at them. And yet you never say, “Oh, you are not your father’s child because you have done wrong and your

father will turn you out of the family.”  
They are never apprehensive of your casting them off. Oh no! They are  
Calvinistic enough to know that they are not threatened with such a punishment! But at the same time they are fully aware—and it is enough to  
distress them—that their father is vexed and that he frowns, so they keep  
out of his way. Now, remember, if we walk in the light as He is in the light,  
we have fellowship with one another and, “the blood of Jesus Christ His  
Son cleanses us from all sin.” But we must walk in the light, or else we  
shall not have fellowship with God. Sin will mar and break up that fellowship. Sin will make you leave off communing, or else communing will  
make you leave off sinning! The two things are not consistent with each  
other. I, of course, do not mean, by sinning, those sins of infirmity which  
we commit unconsciously, but I mean a general habit of sinning to which  
our willfulness or our negligence contribute.  
No rebellion or remissness can be tolerated in those who are living with  
God. Have you ever noticed two boys that want some indulgence and one  
of them says, “Ask Father for such-and-such. Ask Father to let us have a  
holiday.” The other says, “John, you ask him.” “No,” says John, “I cannot  
ask him. You ask him.” “Why should the younger one ask?” “Well,” John  
says, “you know I have offended Father and though, of course, he loves  
me, yet I do not think it is quite the time for me to go and ask him for any  
great favor. You go and ask for us both.” Have you not felt, sometimes,  
like that when engaged in prayer when you have not been walking with  
God as you should? You could pray for forgiveness; you could pray for  
common mercies; but as for any great favor or special mercy you have felt  
ashamed, at such times, to ask, and you have been glad for some Brother  
to open his mouth a little wider than you dared and ask for the Church  
and you some great blessing.  
O Lord, Your servant knows what it is to draw near to Your Mercy Seat,  
but he feels as if he were not on such terms with You as usual and that  
he cannot offer prayers and intercessions with that sense of liberty he has  
often enjoyed. There are other times when God meets us with the kisses of  
His love and says, “Ask what you will, and it shall be given to you.” It is  
grand praying with us then! “Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have  
respect unto all Your commandments.” I shall not plead my obedience before You. No, verily, but I shall plead the blood and righteousness of  
Christ—and this I shall do with all the greater boldness because my heart  
is sprinkled from an evil conscience—and that same Spirit which has  
worked obedience in me will work in me the spirit of adoption! And He  
that taught me to listen to Your voice will teach me so to speak that You  
will listen to my voice and an answer of peace shall come to me! May God bless you, comfort your hearts and establish you in every  
good word and work for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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“GOOD JUDGMENT”  
NO. 2688

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, AUGUST 19, 1900.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, JULY 21, 1881.

**“You have dealt well with Your servant, O LORD, according unto Your Word. Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed Your Commandments.”  
Psalm 119:65, 66.**

WHEN the Psalmist wrote these words, he was contemplating the goodness of God. In the verse preceding our text, the 64th, he sang, “The earth, O Jehovah, is full of Your mercy!” as if he could not walk abroad without seeing evidences of it, or look upward, or backward, or around him, without everywhere perceiving the Omnipresent goodness of the Most High. Whatever season of the year it is in which we take our walks abroad into the field of Nature, we ought to be in such a condition of mind and heart as to see proofs of the fullness of God’s love everywhere around us, but especially, I think, it should be so in these summer months when the fields are ripening toward the harvest and we see how God is fulfilling His ancient Covenant, “While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.” How thankful we ought to be that the Lord thus remembers the earth and makes it bring forth the corn and everything else that is necessary to supply the needs of men! So let us bless God that the earth is still full of His mercy.

Is our own life in the same condition, or are we strangers to the goodness of God? Is there mercy all around us, yet none for us? Well, let others answer these questions as they may, there are many here present who can reply most emphatically, “No, the earth is full of God’s mercy and we can, each one of us, say to Him, ‘You have dealt well with Your servant, O Lord.’ Though You have had so many others of Your creatures to care for, You have not forgotten poor me. Though I am but the merest atom, dwelling in a world which is, itself, nothing more than a speck when compared with the innumerable worlds that throng Your universe, yet You have not failed to let Your mercy come to me, even to me.”

I have sometimes lighted upon a little flower right in the depths of the forest glades. It seemed as if it were hidden quite away, utterly concealed by the towering trees and yet it bloomed as sweetly as if it had been watched over and cared for by the utmost skill, for somewhere between the branches—I could not tell where—there was a little window through which the sun shone into the heart of that tiny flower, kissing it into perfume, and tinting it with those lovely colors which made it so attractive! All around it, the soil was bare, but this sweet flower flourished all by itself, and so, Brothers and Sisters, if you have lived in the midst of those who have forgotten your God, you have been hidden away in obscurity, yet the Lord has not forgotten you and, somehow—yes, and continually— the beams of His gracious sunlight have come even to you and you must bless and praise and magnify Him to whom you owe all that you have and are! Therefore cheerfully bear witness with the rest of God’s people to this blessed fact and join with the Psalmist in saying, “You have dealt well with Your servant, O Lord, according unto Your Word.”

You may go further and say, “You have dealt well with all Your servants, O Lord, according to Your Word.” David had not always thought so, but he did think so when he came to sum up the total of his life’s experience and to write it down in his diary—for I suppose that the 119th Psalm was made up of the entries in David’s diary as he went along. This was the summary of all that he had experienced, that God had dealt well with him—but as he had not always thought so, he felt that he had been very much misled and mistaken in judgment—and therefore he prayed this prayer: “Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I have believed Your Commandments.”

There will be three things for me to talk about tonight. First, judgment expressed. David expressed his judgment as to how God had dealt with him and very sound and judicious judgment it was—“You have dealt well with Your servant, O Lord, according unto Your Word.” Secondly, I shall have to speak to you about judgment desired—“Teach me good judgment and knowledge.” And, thirdly, I shall tell you about

 judgment possessed. The Psalmist already possessed a measure of good judgment—he was not altogether left to be as the foolish, for he could truthfully say to the Lord, “I have believed Your Commandments.” He had possessed judgment enough for that and that is one reason why he might expect to have more, for it is an old law of God’s Kingdom, “Whoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance.”

I. First, then, here is David’s JUDGMENT EXPRESSED—“You have dealt well with Your servant, O Lord.”  
Looking through his past life, he came to the conclusion, first, that God had dealt with him. It is a very awe-inspiring Truth of God and one that should make us feel that this life is a solemn thing, because in it God deals with us. We thought that we had been having dealings with our fellow men and so we have, but, all the while, there has been Another who has also been dealing with us. And we say, “Under all, and over all, and within all, have been the dealings of His Providence.” Or, rather, let us say, “the dealings of God, Himself,” so that we can personally say, “You have dealt with Your servant.” It will not be strange if we add, “How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the House of God and this is the gate of Heaven. Surely the Lord is in this place.”  
There are some who cannot or who will not see that God deals with men in this mortal life. Alas, for them! God is the very Life of life and there are some of us who could not be made to think otherwise than that God has dealt with us, for there have been portions of our life which have been so surprising that whenever we look back upon them, they amaze us! There is no novel that ever was written that can equal in interest the true life of a believing man. His path is strewn with wonders and thick with marvelous displays of his Lord’s love. I will not refer especially to any man’s life. If I did, it would have to be the one I know best, that is, my own. Each man must speak according to his own experience and I am compelled to say, and to say it without the slightest hesitation, “The Lord has dealt with my soul.” As surely as I live, I have spoken with Him and He has spoken with me. No, more than that, He has dealt out innumerable mercies to me and constantly dealt with me—and through me He has dealt with many others, also. And this I know, that life would not be worth living if it did not continually touch the hem of Jehovah’s garments! The very virtue of life streams into our life through our being in contact with Him. Where the little circle of our existence impinges upon the unutterably vast circumference of His power and Glory is where we get the blessings that we need!  
I wish that we recognized far more clearly than we do that God is around us at all times. In the olden days, the saints often met with God—sometimes beneath a tree, or beside a bush, or in a lone desert, or outside a city wall, or by a brook at midnight, or in a furnace all aglow— they met Him in all manner of places, for He was much about in those good old days, or else there were men about, then, who were quick to record His manifestations to His people. But have not we also beheld His face again and again? Have not we often had communion with the WellBeloved? Has He not had dealings with us, also? Surely the beams and timbers of this House of Prayer would cry out against us if we did not say, “Verily, the Lord has been mindful of us and He has manifested Himself unto us as He does not unto the world. Truly, God has dealt with us.”  
This is also true of every man, though not in the same sense, nor to the same extent. God has dealt with you all. Into whatever position you have been cast, God has had some dealings with you. Take heed lest His dealings of long-suffering, being slighted, He should begin to deal with you after another fashion, for He has a rod of iron, and woe be to the potter’s vessels in the day when He begins to dash them in pieces! Oh, that He might deal with us only in mercy and never come to deal with us in wrath, as He will have to do with the men who go on in their iniquities! That is the first judgment of David, that God had dealt with him.  
But he also judged that God had dealt well with him—“You have dealt well with Your servant, O Lord.” And this, too, is our conclusion. Taking God’s dealings as a whole, He has dealt well with us. There are some points in His dealings with us which have been so special that the words of our text hardly appear emphatic enough to describe them. For instance, when I think of God’s purposes concerning us from before the foundation of the world, it hardly seems sufficient to say, “The Lord has dealt well with us.” When I remember the Covenant, that “Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things, and sure,” I want to say something much stronger than that God has dealt well with us—I prefer to say that He has dealt with us like a God, in a Divine way for which there is no earthly comparison! Then, when He gave His Son to bleed and die for us and when He sent His Spirit to convert us, and then to dwell in us, it is not enough if I say, “You have dealt well with Your servants.” It is better than well! It is indescribably, unutterably well that God has dealt with us in the way of free, rich, Sovereign, Immutable, everlasting love—glory be to His holy name!  
But take our personal experience, for I suppose the Psalmist is here referring to that. How well the Lord has dealt with us in Providence! Adding up all our varied experiences, we can truly say that all things have worked together for our good. Life has been a strange mixture for some of us—our coat of arms might be the checkers, black and white, for we have had sweets and bitters intermingled—bitter sweets and sweet bitters. What strange compounds many of our lives are! The evening and the morning have made the day from the creation and we have had darkness and brightness, but, putting the whole together, the result has been more than well. If we had been the pilot of our own ship, we could not have steered it better than God has done—no, we could not have guided it anything like as well as He has done. We would have been sure to make a spiritual shipwreck long ago if we had been our own pilots. We would have been bankrupts before now if we had been our own managers! But God has managed our affairs so successfully that looking upon the whole of them at this moment, we can truly say that God has dealt well with us.  
I may go much further than that and say that if we were to take to pieces the whole of God’s dealings with us, there is not one fragment out of it all of which we would not have to say that God has dealt well with us in it. This is especially true of those parts of His dealings with us which have seemed to be the roughest. Oh, how we ought to bless God for the use He has made of the rod! Among all the blessings of the Covenant, surely there is none that, for our present imperfect state, has in it greater immediate virtues than the rod of the Covenant from the strokes of which we have not been spared! How grateful we ought to be for sanctified affliction! Wisely did the poet write, concerning the varied experiences of God’s children—  
*“‘Tis well when on the mount  
They feast on dying love,  
And ‘tis as well in God’s account,  
When they the furnace prove.”*  
I am sure that in looking back upon all the way that the Lord has led you, those of you who are His children will be bound to say that goodness and mercy have followed you all the days of your life! There has not been a single mistake or one unkind act on God’s part. He has sometimes cut you with the very sharpest knife He had and it was necessary for Him to cut deeply with it so as to get out the very roots of the cancer that was destroying you. You would have been lost if it had not been that you lost your all—but that loss was your greatest gain! I have heard of one who said that he never saw till he was blind. And of another who said that he never ran in the way of God’s Commandments till he lost the use of both his legs. Oftentimes that which has thrown us down has, in the best sense, lifted us up! So each Believer can adopt the language of the text, and say, “You have dealt well with Your servant, O Lord.” In every place, and at every time, it has been all well!  
It has also been well in every sense of the word. “Well”—that is to say, wise. “Well”—that is to say, kind, which is something more than being simply wise. “Well”—that is to say, kinder than kind, the kindest of all! What God has done for us has always been the best thing that could be done! It could not have been better. I sometimes fear that, on our part, it could hardly have been worse—shame on us that it was so bad! But, on His part, nothing could possibly have excelled it—every step that He has taken has been full of infinite love and wisdom. And as to the ultimate effects and results of it all, it is well. There will come something better for us out of all that God has prepared for us than has come out of it yet. All is well, and all shall be well. Pronounce the word with all the emphasis that you can lay upon it and look at it from all sides, and then say, “You have dealt well with Your servant, O Lord.”  
Now let me shift this kaleidoscope a little, that you may take another peep at all the marvels that it contains. Notice, next, that God has dealt well with us as His servants—“You have dealt well with Your servant, O Lord.” Of course He has dealt well with us as His children, giving us the child’s portion and the heir’s portion! He has dealt well with us as His bride, as the members of His mystical body and so on. But David said to the Lord, “You have dealt well with Your servant,” and I will try to show you how He has dealt well with us as His servants.  
First, He has given us blessed work to do. There is no such employment as serving God—this employment is our enjoyment! To serve God is to reign! The Lord has sometimes given us difficult service—so we have thought—but He has always given us proportionate strength and has never exacted of us more than He has enabled us to accomplish. On another occasion, David wrote, “Unto You, O Lord, belongs mercy: for You render to every man according to his work.” That is to say, “You have supplied the straw when you have expected the bricks to be made. You have given the five talents if you have looked for five other talents to be gained as interest on them. You have dealt well in giving little work to those who have had little strength and less work when the strength has grown less, and more strength when more work had to be done and most strength of all when work and suffering came together. You have been very considerate of Your servant’s broken bones and many weaknesses. You have dealt well with Your servant in that way.”

But servants expect to receive not only work, but provision—and the Lord has dealt well with His servants in that respect, also. He has always kept us in livery—sometimes we may have thought that our clothes were getting pretty well worn out and that it was time for us to have a change—and it has always come. We have also always had food. God has never kept a stinted table and we may say of our Heavenly Father’s house that there is always bread enough and to spare for all His servants. The Lord has supplied us in Providence and especially in Grace. What fat things full of marrow, what wines on the lees well-refined has He prepared for us! God never starves His servants or puts them on short commons. No, each one of them can truly say to Him, “You have dealt well with Your servant, O Lord, according to Your Word, both in provender and in labor.”  
And servants like, beside that, to get a word of encouragement now and then from their masters. There was one who left an excellent master with whom he had traveled all over the Continent. And when his master asked the reason why he wished to leave him, he answered, “You have not been unkind to me; you have given me all the wages that I needed, but when I have been with you in the darkest nights, in the heaviest tempests, in the most terrible frosts, you have never spoken a cheering word to me and I cannot continue to live such a life as that.” You know that a kind word or a smiling look will go a long way and in this respect, also, we can, each one, say, “You have dealt well with Your servant, O Lord.” How graciously He has smiled upon us when we have been trying to serve Him! How much He has made of our little! He has often commended us even when we have been blaming ourselves—and when we confessed that we were unprofitable servants and only spoke the truth when we said so, He has been ready to say, “Well done, good and faithful servants.” He has often said to us, “I know your works,” at the very time when we have hardly known them ourselves! Or, if we have known them, we have wanted not to recognize them, but to pass them by as if they were unworthy of notice. The Lord has, indeed, dealt well with His servants in the way of encouragement.  
And so He has in respect to our wages. He has given us earnests of the pay which we shall receive at the end of our day’s toil. Oh, that blessed pay! How rich we shall be when we receive it, not of debt, but all of Grace—a whole Heaven and a whole Christ, and a whole God for our whole hearts to enjoy throughout the whole of eternity! Was there ever such a “penny” as that paid to laborers at the close of their day’s work? But even on the way the Lord has given us blessed earnests, sweet pledges of what is yet to come to us. We have good cause to love our Master and to love His work, and to be grateful to Him for the pay He gives us for it. And again, each one of us can say to Him, “You have dealt well with Your servant, O Lord.” Is there any one of His servants here who will not say this? I always think that God has dealt well with me in not turning me out of doors and I still pray the prayer—  
*“Dismiss me not from Your service, Lord”—*for I count it my highest honor to be permitted to do anything for Him. He might well say to any of us, “You are not worth your salt,” and send us adrift, but He has not done so and we can still say to Him, “You have dealt well with Your servant, O Lord, and still permitted him to take his place in the ranks of those that wait upon You and, therefore, blessed be Your holy name!”  
So far, you see, David’s judgment is one in which we fully coincide— “You have dealt with Your servant” and, “You have dealt well with him.”

But we also agree with him that God has dealt with us according to His Word. It greatly sweetens a blessing when we know that it comes to us by way of the promises. Whatever God has done to us, in love and kindness, is only what He said He would do! Look back, now, and see whether the print of Providence does not exactly answer to the type of the promise. Concerning many things that we have needed, God said, “I will give them to you.” And now we can say to Him, “You have done so.” He promised that He would be with us. He promised that He would bless us. He promised that bread would be given us and that our waters should be sure. He said, “I will never leave you, nor forsake you” and all along He has acted according to His Word!

Even when He has chastened us, He has only fulfilled His own Word, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.” His pruning has been as Christ said it would be, “Every branch that bears fruit, He purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit.” When He chastises us for our disobedience, He only fulfils His threat, “If you walk contrary to Me, I will walk contrary to you.” It is all according to the Word and if anybody wants to know what the life of a Christian is, let him read what the promise of God is, for, as far as God is concerned in the life of a Christian—the promise is a prophecy of what it will be—and the prophecy is fulfilled in the life of every man who puts his trust in God.

Now this was a sound judgment on David’s part, but it was a judgment at which he appears to have arrived after God’s dealings with him were almost ended. It would be far better and much wiser if we could daily learn to say, “You are dealing well with Your servant, O Lord, according to Your Word.” But we are often so foolish that, like old Jacob, we say, “All these things are against us.” David probably felt that in former days he had often made a mistake, so he here corrects himself and expresses a true and just judgment concerning the dealings of God with him. May we be taught to judge righteously of God while the work is still going on! Is there anybody here, out of all God’s people, who will do otherwise? If so, let me just suggest that if we cannot say, “You have dealt well with Your servant, O Lord, according to Your Word,” then, in effect, do say this, “You have not dealt well with Your servant, O Lord—and You have not kept Your Word.”

Is there any child of God prepared to talk like that? Not one! And if you or I cannot say, “You are dealing well with Your servant, O Lord, according to Your Word,” then we are, in effect, saying, “You are not dealing well with Your servant, and You are not acting according to Your Word.” Are we prepared to say that? No, not to say it—not to say it—perhaps we would be more honest if we did, but if anybody thinks it, let him prostrate himself before the God of Heaven and earth and ask for the forgiveness of his ungrateful unbelief in daring to think that God can be otherwise than good and kind towards a soul redeemed with the heart’s blood of Christ, chosen from before the foundation of the world and ordained to everlasting glory with God Himself! May we fall back again, then, upon the bold assertion of the text and say to God, if we do not say it to anybody else—say it as we walk home and say it as we kneel by our bedside—“You have dealt well with Your servant, O Lord, according to Your Word—and blessed be Your holy name!”

Now I must pass on to speak very briefly concerning the other two heads—they are the practical application of this first one.  
II. Secondly, we have to consider GOOD JUDGMENT DESIRED. “Teach me good judgment and knowledge.”  
David felt that his judgment had been greatly at fault, so that he had made great mistakes with regard to God. And now that he had come to a more correct judgment, he offered this prayer: “Teach me good judgment and knowledge.” This is what all Christians need—better judgment— more good judgment—more sound judgment.  
May God help us, for the future, first, to judge His Providence better!— *“Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,  
But trust Him for His Grace.”*  
Next, judge your sufferings better and learn to believe that it is good for you that you have been afflicted. May we get our judgment more correct so that it may not be so hasty, or so unbelieving! May our judgments not be, as they sometimes have been, desponding, dark, dreary! We need to have our judgments brightened up. Pray God to make them better.  
Then we shall be able to have good judgment in matters of doctrine. I wish we could get all Christians to have good judgment in this respect. They go to hear one man who is very fluent. He preaches Calvinistic doctrine and it is very sweet to them. Another preaches Arminian doctrine and contradicts all that the first one said—but to these people it is equally good, for he, also, is an eloquent man. Almost any error is sucked down by nine out of ten of the professors of the present day so long as it is sufficiently sugared! If you will but spice it well, it matters not to them what it is. I have been shocked to find how some will go and listen to the very drivel which is not the Gospel of God at all, so long as it is but fitly spoken! May God give us good judgment upon this matter! We have not as much as we ought to have, otherwise we would have judged more wisely concerning much that we have heard.  
“Lord, teach me good judgment and knowledge,” means, “Let me know You. Let me know Your Truth. Let me know the voice of Christ, so that I may not follow a stranger, because I know not the voice of strangers and have that discretion which is not to be deceived.” There are some preachers who would deceive the very elect, if it were possible, but the true saints shall not be deceived, for God will teach them “good judgment and knowledge.”  
We also need good judgment concerning our temptations. We are often like silly little birds, which, for want of judgment, are allured by a bird call. Satan, like a cunning fowler with foolish birds, makes sure work of uninstructed Christians! They are taken as in a net and if the Lord did not graciously deliver them, they could not escape. We need good judgment to spy out the hidden temptation and to see through the devil’s tricks and traps. He does not come to men showing his hoofs and horns—but he comes as an angel of light—and he is never so much a devil as when he appears to be an angel of light. I feel pleased to think that the Revised Version has altered that clause in the Lord’s prayer to, “Deliver us from the Evil One.” Some do not like it because they do not believe in the Evil One. Or, perhaps, because they are too much his friend to wish to pray against him! But, in these days he is so intensely an Archenemy and he slinks about so craftily, that many people have begun to imagine that he no longer exists! And he can do ten times more mischief because of that delusion, so we will pray against him flat to his face, “Deliver us from the Evil One. Give us good judgment and knowledge, that we may not be ignorant of his devices.” We also need good judgment as to the many false spirits that are gone forth into the world. “Try the spirits,” is an admonition that is still necessary and we need to be taught good judgment that we may be able to do it—and discern between good and evil.

I will not detain you by speaking at any length upon this point, only I just want to say that if we have been mistaken about God, the probability is that we have been mistaken about other things. And even if the dealings of our own Heavenly Father have sometimes perplexed us and we have come to wrong conclusions concerning them, we ought to distrust our own judgment about other things and constantly go to God the Holy Spirit for teaching and enlightening, offering this prayer, “Teach me good judgment.” I wish that those who are troubled with skepticism and doubt would go to God in this way. If men who have difficulties would tell them to God in prayer, spreading out their dilemmas before the Most High, I believe He would teach them good judgment and they would see their way where now everything seems to be dark and dubious. Let this plan be tried and I believe it will not be tried in vain!  
III. My last point is concerning JUDGMENT POSSESSED.  
The Psalmist had some good judgment and, therefore, he asked for more. He possessed a measure of right judgment, which he expressed in these words, “I have believed Your Commandments.” That is a very unusual expression because, generally, people believe doctrines, or believe promises. But David says that he believed God’s Commandments. That is a phase of faith that is very seldom spoken of and it means that, notwithstanding all David’s troubles, he had believed God’s sacred Law to be a wise one, a just one and a true one. He had believed that it came from God and he had, therefore, reverenced it. He had believed it to be infinitely wise and, therefore, he followed it. He believed it to be right and, therefore, he stuck to it. He believed that in the end it would turn out to be the wisest policy to do as God had bidden him, so he stood to that. He seems to say, “Lord, I am very foolish, yet I have had wit enough given me, by Your Spirit, to believe that Your Commandments are the best that can be, so I wish to keep them and to believe that Your Commandments are the best guide to me in life and, therefore, I desire to follow them.”  
Brothers and Sisters, if you do not know much, yet if you know enough to be able to say to God, “I have believed Your Commandments and, by Your Grace, I have not departed from Your Truth,” then all will come right with you. Suppose a man is tempted to steal. I do not mean to go and pilfer, but to falsify an account, or cheat in business, or what is much the same thing—to get money by borrowing it when he knows he cannot repay it? Well, the man who acts like that does not really believe God’s Commandment, “You shall not steal.” I have heard of one who needed wood in winter time and his neighbor in the next farm had a stack of wood. As he walked along the road, something whispered in his ear, “All things are yours.” “Well,” he said, “that thought comes from God! I will go and take home a log or two.” When he had climbed over into the field and begun to get the wood out of the stack, there came to his mind another passage of Scripture, “You shall not steal,” and he dropped the wood at once!  
My dear Friends, never believe an impression that is contrary to God’s Word! In fact, I would like you not to believe any impression but that which comes from Scripture, itself. I met, the other day, a person who was impressed that he was to preach for me. He said that it was revealed to him, by the Spirit of God, that he should preach for me one Sunday. I told him that he could do so when the Spirit of God also revealed it to me, for I did not believe in lopsided revelations. I thought that it was necessary for the revelation to come to me as well as to him. When it does, I will attend to it. Some people have, every now and then, a supposed revelation that just suits them. A man believes that it is impressed upon him to do exactly what he wants to do! For instance, he is sure that he ought to get married. Many young people are quite sure about that matter when it would be far better for them not to do anything of the sort. A man is often impressed that he ought to do a thing simply because he wants to do it—the wish is father to the thought. Now, if you believe God’s Commandments, you will not always believe in what looks like a Providence. Do you not know that there are devil’s providences, sometimes? At least that is what I call them.  
When Jonah went down to flee unto Tarshish, he found a ship going there—was not that a remarkable providence? Perhaps he said to himself, “I felt some doubt about whether I was right in going there, but when I got down to the seashore, there was a ship—and there was just room for me to go as a passenger, and the fare was just the amount that I had—and so I felt that it must be of the Lord.” Nonsense, Jonah! It is of the Lord for you to do what is right! And if you have judgment enough to do that, let others be foolish enough to follow this impression or that, this whim or that, this notion or that which may come to them from Satan—or their own evil hearts!  
Be you, dear Friends, wise enough to stand to the plain Commandments of the Word. God help you to do so, for uprightness and integrity shall preserve you and nothing else will. “Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed.” Those who do not believe God’s Commandments and run off to all sorts of shifts and schemes, and tricks of their own, will have to suffer for it! Pray to God to teach you good judgment. And if He has given you a measure of it, may He continually give you more and more, for His name’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**PSALM 119:64-72.**

Verses 64-67. The earth, O LORD, is full of Your mercy: teach me Your statutes. You have dealt well with Your servant, O LORD, according unto Your Word. Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed Your Commandments. Before I was afflicted I went astray.—Prosperity had been to the Psalmist like the gap in the hedge through which the sheep wander from the shepherd, but affliction had been to him like the prickly bushes that often stop the sheep from wandering still further, so he says, “Before I was afflicted I went astray.”

67. But now have I kept Your Word. What a benefit, then, affliction had been to him! And what a blessing it often is to us! So, instead of dreading it, as we usually do, we ought to welcome it and be on the look-out for the blessing which is to come to us through it. Many a child of God has joined with Dr. Watts in singing—

*“Father, I bless Your gentle hand—  
How kind was Your chastising rod  
That forced my conscience to a stand,  
And brought my wandering soul to God!  
Foolish and vain, I went astray  
Ere I had felt Your scourges, Lord—  
I left my Guide, and lost my way;  
But now I love and keep Your Word.”*

68. You are good, and do good. What a delightful description this is of God and His works! Who is good? Our Lord Jesus supplies the answer, “There is none good but One, that is, God.” And His works are like Himself—“You are good, and do good.”

68. Teach me Your statutes. In the 25th Psalm, David wrote, “Good and upright is the Lord: therefore will He teach sinners in the way.” And here, because the Lord is good, and does good, the Psalmist prays, “Teach me Your statutes.” He will teach us that which is good because He is, Himself, good. What a blessing it is for us to have such a Teacher! How wonderful it is that God should be so condescending as to take us into His school!

69. The proud have forged a lie against me. They have kept on hammering away until they have finished the falsehood. They have “forged” it, as one forges a deadly weapon in the fire.

69. But I will keep Your Precepts with my whole heart. “It is no use for me to trouble about them. When they have forged one lie, they will probably forge another and there is practically no end to that black business. It is no use for me to try to answer them. I will turn to a far more profitable occupation—‘I will keep Your Precepts with my whole heart.’”

70. Their heart is as fat as grease. Insensible, lifeless—they have no conscience, no feeling—they are so proud of their prosperity that they are afflicted with fatty degeneration of the heart.

70. But I delight in Your Law. What a blessing it is for us to find our fatness there—to delight in the marrow and fatness of God’s Law!  
71. It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Your Statutes. The Psalmist was so impressed with the benefits which he had derived from his afflictions, that he returned to the subject—“It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Your Statutes.” There is much teaching power about God’s rod. He always keeps one in His school and it is greatly needed for such dull scholars as we are. Many a child of God can repeat the Psalmist’s testimony—“It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Your statutes.” “You have whipped a little knowledge into me and not much has come in any other way.”  
72. The Law of Your mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver. David had a great deal of gold and silver, far more than any of us have, but yet he thought very little of it in comparison with God’s Law. Many people despise gold and silver because they have not any. The fox said the grapes were sour because they were beyond his reach. But here is a case in which a man had as much gold and silver as he could ever want—yet he says that the Law of God’s mouth was better than all of it, and he was wise in saying so! For gold and silver can be stolen. Riches often take to themselves wings and fly away. Even great wealth may soon be spent and gone, but God’s Law never leaves those who love it, nor lets them lose it. When all our spending money is gone, then is the Commandment of God still our treasure. Happy is everyone who can say, with David, “The Law of Your mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.”

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—73 (Part 2), 681, 214.  
—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #1629 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

TWO GOOD THINGS  
NO. 1629

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

***“It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Your statutes.”  
Psalm 119:71.***

***“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 73:28.***

THERE is an old proverb which says, “When a man is 40 he is either a fool or a physician,” that is to say, he either does not know anything or else be begins to know what is good for him! Some of us who are beyond that age think that we know, in some measure, what is good for us. We are not inclined to be very positive as to what is good for other people, but there are one or two things in reference to ourselves of which we say very dogmatically, “They are good for me.” We have undergone such a sufficient investigation, experiment and personal trial that we are not in any fear of being contradicted, or, if we should be, we put our foot down and defy the contradiction!

The two things in my two texts I am certain about and I believe there are many here who share my positiveness. The first is that whatever it may be for other people, “it is good for me to have been afflicted.” And the second is that whatever it may be to other people, “it is good for me to draw near to God.” We assert this, not because we have been told so, but because of personal proof! And we assert it now, not as young beginners who are buckling on their harness and who think themselves certain, but as those who have gone some distance in the pilgrimage of life and know by actual test and matter of fact that it is so.

Beloved Brothers and Sisters, during our lives we have met with many things which we know were not good for us. Some things have been manifestly bad. Sin is always poisonous, whatever form it takes. Error is always injurious, however insidious may be its shape and however poetic may be the terms in which it is expressed. We pray God that we may have nothing to do with sin or with error, for these things cannot be good—they must be evil. We have also met with certain things which, at the time, appeared to us to be good and, under some aspects, might have been so. But we are not sure, at the present moment, whether they were good or not. We have enjoyed soft hours of ease which, perhaps, weakened us, or sunshiny times of high delight which, in a measure, turned our brain.

There have been allotted to us times of learning in which we made great acquisitions of knowledge, but “knowledge puffs up” and we fear we were puffed up. There have been calms with us when the seabirds sat upon the waters and the seas were glassy as a lake, for the winds were hushed. But the calm was treacherous and it bred ill savor and unhealthiness within our spirit. I am not sure, my Friend, though you thought it a fine day when you grew rich—I am not sure that it was a good thing for you to be wealthy—for you have not been half as spiritually-minded or half as happy as you used to be. Yes, you did enter into a much larger sphere, and you thought it a noble thing. You almost rang the bells about it. Are you quite sure that it was good for you? Are you as good a man in the great sphere as you were in the little one?

Do you live as near to God, now, with that great business to handle, as you did when your hat covered your whole estate and you went to bed at night with no fear of robbers, for you had nothing to lose? Much that seems good is only good in the seeming. As for the two things before us in our texts, we have no question about them! We know that it is good for us that we have been afflicted. We know that it is good for us that we should draw near to God. We will talk about these undoubted jewels and may God grant that our talk may be profitable.

I. Turning to the 119th Psalm, at the 71st verse, we will talk of that good thing first—AFFLICTION HAS BEEN GOOD FOR US. “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Your statutes.” I repeat what I said just now—every man must speak for himself—we are not sure that affliction is good for everybody. Some persons have been soured by affliction. They fell into trouble and they rebelled against God. And so the trouble did not work in them any permanent good; it rather developed their combative tendencies and they have ever since remained with their hands against other men—compelling others to lift their hands against them.

I have known individuals in a family who seemed to have a spite against everyone they saw simply because they were disappointed in early life, or had made a venture and sustained a loss. They grew sour, they keep sour and they grow more sour every day till one wonders what strength of vinegar will yet flow through their veins! It is not good for some people to have been afflicted at all and yet it is not the fault of the affliction—it is the fault of the persons afflicted. It might have produced in them a splendid character if all had been right to begin with! But, inasmuch as all was wrong, that very process which should have ripened them into sweetness has hastened them to rottenness. That same thing which, in gracious souls, has brought forth everything that is pure and lovely, has, in others, produced everything that is malicious and envious. I hope, however, that I may say of many here present, or that they can say of themselves, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted.”

The enquiry is—How has it been good? First, it has been good in connection with many other good things. It has acted as a counteractive with reference to the great blessings which God has bestowed upon us in other ways. We are so constituted that we cannot bear very much prosperity. Some men might have been rich, but God knew they could not bear it and so He has never suffered them to be tempted above what they are able to bear. Others might have been famous, but they would have been ruined by pride and so the Lord, in tender mercy, has withheld from them an opportunity of distinguishing themselves, denying them this apparent advantage for their real good. Where God favors any man with prosperity He will send a corresponding amount of affliction to go with it and deprive it of its injurious tendencies.

I have seen men walking upon the high places of the earth till their brain turned and they fell—and there was woe in the Church of God. I have seen others whom God has placed on a lofty pinnacle but, at the same time, He has almost crushed them between the upper and the nether millstone of sharp spiritual trouble, or domestic suffering, or physical pain. Many have asked, “Why is this?” and the reason has been that their suffering was an offset to their success. God’s servant would have slipped with his feet if it had not been for the secret chastening that he endured. I put it to some of you whom God has greatly favored. You have looked upon your prosperity as a gift, but you have wondered why you should be tried at the same time—it was because you could not have borne the favor if you had not received the chastening! You were glad of the sail and glad of the wind that filled it, but you could not understand why the ballast was put into your hold—you thought it hindered your progress.

My Friend, you would have been blown out of the water if it had not been for the ballast which kept you where you ought to be. I, for my part, owe more, I think, to the anvil and to the hammer, to the fire and to the file, than to anything else. I bless the Lord for the correctives of His Providence by which, if He has blessed me on the one hand with sweets, He has blessed me on the other hand with bitters. To me He has measured out a double blessing—the lamb and the bitter herbs to eat with it, seldom the one without the other. Thus, “It is good for me to have been afflicted”—good as a corrective for other goods!

It is good, dear Friends, to have been afflicted as a cure for evils existent within our nature. David says, “Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now I have kept Your Word.” That is the case with many of God’s servants. They were prone to one peculiar temptation and though they may not have seen it, the chastening hand of God was aimed at that special weakness of their character. We sometimes talk about phrenology and the bumps on one’s head. You may make a great many mistakes over that matter, but God knows your tendencies and faculties. He knows the characteristics of His children accurately—far more accurately than any science can ever tell them—and He deals with extraordinary wisdom and prudence towards each one of His family.

I suppose that when the biographies of the saints are all read by the light of eternity, we, even we, shall be able to see why the painful career of certain Christians could not have been other than it was if they were to get to Heaven at the last. We shall see why that unusual trial was sent and sent when they seemed least able to bear it. We shall discover that God interposed the screen of trial against the unseen fiery dart which only His eternal eyes saw—and laid the weight just where Satan was about to put the hand to overthrow—that very weight adding power to stand to the man who, in the lightness of his heart, had otherwise been tripped up. It is all well, Brothers and Sisters! It is all well!

The surgery which is cutting so deep—the knife which is cutting to the very quick—is only reaching to the point where the mischief lies. That mischief must come out, root and branch. There is a cancer of evil tendency within us and not a rootlet of it must be left, for, if the least fiber of it is suffered to remain through tenderness, it will be an unkind tenderness, for the cancer will grow again and fill the heart with its malevolence. Therefore does the Lord, out of love, cut deep—sharp and cruel are His wounds. Most cruel do they seem when they are in greatest tenderness of Divine Grace.

We do not yet know all the mischief that is in us. I could undertake, in five minutes, to make any perfect man prove to himself that he was

 not perfect. Only let me set certain persons upon him, to tease him, and we shall soon see his irritation. Let the devil loose on a man who is hard by the threshold of Heaven and you will soon find that corruption dwells even in the hearts of the regenerate! The Lord would have us aware of this and, therefore, He often sends trial to reveal the hidden evil. We are often like a glass of water which has been standing still for hours and looks very clear and bright—but there is a sediment—and a little stir soon discovers it and clouds the crystal!

That sediment is the old nature. Trial comes and awakens into activity that which had been lying still and we say, “Dear me, I had no idea that such evil was in my heart.” Of course you hadn’t! You who live so comfortably at home among Christian friends do not know how sinful you are! You hear of people out in the world doing this and that and you say, “What naughty folks they are.” They are no worse than you would be if you were put into the same position—only you are at ease and they are sorely tempted. Dogs sleep when no one enters the house, but a knock at the door will set them barking. The Lord does not wish us to boast of sham holiness and, therefore, He sends us trials that we may see the mischief which lurks in our hearts—and that we may be driven to the Holy Spirit for power to conquer our sin and to the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ for the real taking away of guilt.

He who has struggled with his inward sins must know that he has been helped both to discover and to overcome many of them by his afflictions. And so in this sense it is good that he has been afflicted. “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.” If this is so, we may not only bear the rod, but even kiss it! Affliction is also useful to God’s people as an actual producer of good things in them. Some virtues cannot be produced in us—at least I do not see how they can be, apart from affliction. One of them is patience. If a man has no trial, how is he to be patient? We all think ourselves patient when we have nothing to bear. We can all stand on the mountain tops before we have tried those dizzy heights! We are all brave when the war is over, though things look rather different when bullets whistle about our ears!

When we are thrown into the sea, our swimming abilities are not quite so extraordinary as we thought they were. We have great notions of what we can do, but trial is the test. Patience, I think, can scarcely be said to be in a man unless he has endured tribulation, “for tribulation works patience.” A veteran warrior is the child of battles and a patient Christian is the offspring of adversity! There is a very sweet Grace called sympathy, which is seldom found in persons who have had no trouble. We are told that our dear Lord and Master, Himself, learned sympathy by being tempted in all points like as we are. He had to feel our infirmities, or else He could not have been touched with a fellow feeling towards us. It is surely so with us. I have stayed, sometimes, with an admirable Brother who never had, he told me, an ache or a pain since he was born that he remembered.

He is a man of 50 and in splendid health. Well, he tries to sympathize with people and he does it to the utmost of his power, but it makes you smile. It is like an elephant picking up a pill! It is a wonderful feat for him to do. He does not understand it. You know, yourself, how hard it is to get sympathy out of those who have never endured a trial similar to your own. Someone goes to see a widow and talks to her about her grief. And she says to herself all the time, “What does he know about it? He has never lost the partner of his life.” A bachelor speaks to a dear soul who has just buried her little child. Unless he is a very wise man, he is apt to say something about children which will irritate, rather than console the bereaved mother. You may try your best, but you have not much of the faculty of sympathy unless you have been in the trial. It is by passing through the fire that we know how to deal with people who are in the furnace!

So we may thank God that we have been afflicted, if we are ministers, or if we are teachers of others. We have sometimes to suffer, not for our own sake, but for the sake of others, that we may be enabled to speak a word in season to him that is weary and say to such, “I know your road. I have been that way before. I know the darkness and weariness of the way.” Pilgrims who are enduring the ills of the wilderness take heart when they see a fellow traveler to whom all these are common things.

Again, it is good for me to have been afflicted because affliction is a wonderful quickener. We are very apt to go to sleep, but affliction often wakes us up. A coachman driving a pair of horses was noticed by one who sat upon the box seat to give a cut of the whip to the off horse. The animal was going on quite regularly and properly and it seemed a needless cruelty to whip it. Another journey and he was observed to do just the same at just that place and the question was put, “I always notice that you give that horse a cut of the whip just here—why is it?” “Well, Sir, he has a nasty habit of shying just at this spot,” said the driver, and I take his attention off by making him think of the whip for a moment.” There is something in that, Brothers and Sisters! Every now and then you and I are apt to stray— but an affliction takes our attention away from the temptation.

There is also another danger in a life of ease—we are far too apt to go to sleep. Like horses, we are apt to get into the way of going on at a regular trot till we move mechanically and pursue our way half asleep. I do not know whether we are all awake even now! Many ministers preach asleep. I am sure they do! Many deacons do all the Church business asleep and numbers of people come to the Prayer Meetings and pray in their sleep! I do not mean physical sleep, but I mean spiritual sleep, which is quite as serious a matter. The whole of some men’s religion is a kind of sleep-walking! There is not that vigor in it; there is not that heart in it; there is not that earnestness in it that there ought to be. They need to be waked up by something startling.

Our trials and afflictions are intended to do this. They come like a clap of thunder and startle us till we ask, “Where am I? What am I doing?” And we begin to question ourselves, “Am I really what I profess to be?” Death stares us in the face. We are put into the balance and weighed and tried. We try our hopes and professions and are less likely to be self-deceived. Realities become realities and fancies become fancies when sharp trials befall us. The things of this world become dreams to us when keen affliction comes. And so it is of special benefit to us because, under the Spirit of God, it is awakening and arousing.

Again, according to our text, it is good for us to have been afflicted by way of instruction. “It is good for me to have been afflicted; that I might learn Your statutes.” Trial is our school where God teaches us on the blackboard. This school house has no windows to let in the cheerful light. It is very dark and so we cannot look out and get distracted by external objectives—but God’s Grace shines like a candle within and by that Light we see what we had never seen before! I stand on the level of my fellow men in the daylight and I cannot see the stars—the glare of day hides them—but if I am made to go down the deep well of affliction—I look up, and there are the stars visible above my head! I see what others cannot see!

I get the Bible and its promises seem written as men sometimes write with the juice of lemon, in invisible characters. I hold the book before the fire of affliction and the writing comes out clearly—and I see in the Bible what I never would have seen if it had not been for fiery trials! The Word of promise must be precious, for God gave it! But I get into trial, myself, and there I test it—and of its preciousness I become personally assured. We learn, I hope, something in the bright fields of joy, but I am more and more persuaded that we do not learn a 10th as much, there, as we do in the Valley of Death-Shade!

There the world loses its charms and we are obliged to look to God. There illusions and delusions pass away and we are compelled to rest on the eternal Rock. There we learn the Truth of God in such a way that we never forget or doubt it. I would to God that some young preachers were plagued all the day long and chastened every morning that they might become sound in the faith! I could wish that some of God’s people were plunged into a sea of tribulation that they might get rid of the modern nonsense which delights them, now, and come back to the old, substantial doctrines of the Puritans which are the only things worth having when we come to suffer or to die!

Yes, it is good for me to have been afflicted! Is it not good for you too, dear Friends, in the way of holy education, teaching you God’s Word and the value and the preciousness of it?

II. I cannot, however, speak any longer upon the virtues of affliction, for I need two or three minutes to dwell upon the Truth of God that, DRAWING NEAR TO GOD HAS BEEN GOOD FOR US. Turn to the 73rd Psalm at the last verse—“It is good for me to draw near to God.” Here, again, we speak with great certainty. Come, Brothers and Sisters, is it not good for you to draw near to God? But what does this drawing near to God mean? First, to feel that God is near us—to be conscious of His Presence. It means to feel, next, that we are perfectly reconciled to Him by the death of His Son and that we are permitted to speak with Him as a man speaks with his friend and, in speaking to Him, to praise Him for what we have received and to ask Him for what we need.

We draw near Him when we tell Him what we feel and assure Him of our belief in His great love. You know what it is to draw near to a friend and to have heart-to-heart talks with him. Then you and the beloved one are quite alone and have no secrets. You tell all your secrets and you learn all that your beloved has to tell. This is drawing near to God—when the secret of your heart is with God and the secret of the Lord is with you—when He speaks to you by the Word and you speak to Him by prayer! When you confess sin and He grants forgiveness! When you spread your needs before Him and He assures you of abundant supplies.

Now, is not this good? Is it not pleasant? Is it not enriching? Does it not raise the soul up above the world? Is it not a very good and profitable thing, so that we may say of it, emphatically, “It is good for me to draw near to God”? One good thing that comes out of it is mentioned in the text. Observe—“I have put my trust in the Lord God.” The nearer you get to God, the more you will be able to trust Him. An unknown God is an untrusted God. “They that know Your name will put their trust in You.” Those who have had the most dealings with God believe most in Him. You that begin with Him try to trust Him—but those who have dealt with Him for long feel that they do trust Him and cannot help it. What is faith in God, Brothers and Sisters, but commonsense? Though, like commonsense, it is the most unusual and most uncommon thing in all the world!

To trust in one who must be true is a commonsense proceeding. And to trust my God who cannot lie is the dictate of true reason! To make Him, who is the greatest fact and the greatest factor, to be, in my life, both the greatest factor and the greatest fact and to act as believing Him to be real— this is prudence. I pray you, draw near to God, so that faith may become to you the mainspring of your life, the new commonsense of your instructed spiritual nature! I rejoice in a faith that will go with me into everything. Sunday-keeping faith, meeting-going faith! If it ends there, it is a pretty piece of confectionery—but faith about my pain, my poverty, my despondency, my old age—that is faith! I want to see a more hardy, practical, workable faith abroad in the land.

Look at Abraham’s faith. I know it was spiritual and so do you—but what had it to do with? It had to do with the birth of a child; with seeking a city; with cattle; with land and the events of everyday life! That is the sort of faith you and I need—Monday faith, Tuesday faith, Wednesday faith— faith that will go into the kitchen; faith that will live in the workshop with you that are book folders, when the other girls laugh at you—faith that will be with you men that are in the workshop where others use foul language! We need faith that can cheer a sailor in a storm; faith that can help a dying man in the hospital; household faith; everyday faith! This is only to be had by drawing near to God. Get right close to Him in deed and in truth—the very life of you living upon the life of God—and then faith will enter into your daily life. You will put your trust in God as your constant Helper if you constantly draw near to Him.

I desire to bear my witness in the last words of this Psalm—“I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all Your works.” My first text, as far as it relates to a preacher, shows how he is taught it in private. “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Your statutes.” My second text, so far as it relates to the preacher, shows how he is helped to preach in public—“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.” To be able to speak of God’s works to others is no small gift—and you gain it by trusting in God, yourself, finding His promises true, and then bearing witness to others.

Draw near to God and have communion with Him—and then come down from the mountain and speak with the people, believing what you say—and expecting God to bless it to those who hear it! That is the way to preach and I pray that every one of us who opens his month for God may do it in this fashion. It is not merely what is in the Bible that we have to set before the people, but what we, ourselves, have tasted and felt of the good Word of Truth experimentally, declaring Jesus Christ in the power of His resurrection as we know it in our own hearts. We cannot do this except by intimate personal fellowship with God.

You, dear Friends, who are engaged in teaching, cannot learn the Truth of God without some measure of affliction. And you cannot tell it out in the right spirit without a large measure of drawing near unto God. Then you can say, “This poor man cried and the Lord heard him.” You can say, “One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see.” You can say, “I sought the Lord and He helped me.” There is a convincing power about such personal testimony. Then it is not only Christ’s word that God blesses, but it is your word, too. “Oh,” you say, “dare you say that?” Yes, Jesus Himself said, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also that shall believe on Me through their word.”

They themselves took the word from Christ, just as they took the bread out of Christ’s hands when He fed the multitude. It was Christ’s word just as it was Christ’s bread, till they got it! But as when they had once received the bread it became Peter’s bread, and John’s bread, and James’ bread and they handed it out and the people fed thereon—so did the word become, “their word,” when they personally accepted it and afterwards passed it to others! It was all Christ’s and yet it was theirs! And you must get the bread in your own hands. You must taste it yourself. You must break it yourself, or else you will not be likely to be blessed with living power among the sons of men.

Now, let us join in thanking God, if He has afflicted us, and if He has drawn us near to Himself. And let us go forth, not to ask for afflictions— that would be unwise—but to accept them hopefully when they come! Let us draw near to God, tonight, and let us not go to our beds till we have seen the face of the Well-Beloved. This shall be my vesper song—

*“Sprinkled afresh with pardoning blood,  
I lay me down to rest,  
As in the embraces of my God,  
Or on my Savior’s breast.”*

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #3027 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

GOD’S TIME FOR COMFORTING  
NO. 3027

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 1907.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JULY 21, 1867.

**“My eyes fail from searching Your Word, saying, When will You comfort me?” Psalm 119:82.**

DAVID, in his troubles, knew where to turn for consolation—and that is no small piece of wisdom. When a man is ill, he may not know to which physician he had better send, but if he knows of one who has had much experience with the disease from which he is suffering, he sends for him at once if he is a wise patient. David knew that the best place for a true Believer to find consolation was in God’s Word, so he did not look in a thousand places, but his eyes were turned to God’s Word—and though he did not immediately find the comfort that he sought, yet he continued to look even till his eyes seemed to fail him, till they ached with looking, till they wearied with watching, till his disappointed expectation made his heart sick! Yet the idea never entered into his mind that he had better knock at another door, or seek another friend, or try another fountain! He still continued in the attitude of expectancy and desire, his eyes still searching the Word of God to find the comfort that he so greatly needed.

Christian, learn this piece of heavenly wisdom from the Psalmist’s experience—there is no other comfort for you beneath the skies like that with which the Word of the Lord will furnish you. If God’s promises cannot comfort you, rest assured that no speech from the lips of man can do it. If your God shall not yield you the consolation that you need, you will go in vain to the giddy world and its pleasures and follies in the hope of finding it. If that overflowing well could ever dry up, you would indeed be the subject of despair. Resolve in your mind never to expect any good thing apart from God. Say with Toplady—

*“I will not be comforted*

*Till Jesus comforts me.”*  
Refuse all consolation but that which comes from the Most High, for it will be fictitious, delusive, dangerous, perhaps fatal—but cling to your God whatever happens! Though He smite you, still cling to Him. Though He slay you, still trust Him. If His Word should seem to be like thunder and lightning to you, though every page of it should seem to bristle as with bayonets and not a single thought of consolation should be found in a thousand verses, yet still cling to your father’s Bible, hold fast to the good old Book which made glad your mother’s heart, for, before long, comfort shall shine forth from it upon you like the sun in the fullness of its strength—and the day shall break and the shadows flee away. Go not elsewhere to look for consolation! Seek out no strange doctrines! Weary not yourself in searching for other comfort, but let your eyes, even if they fail, still look to the Word of God for the consolation that your soul needs!

David, however, besides looking to the Book of the Lord, looked to the Lord of the Book, saying, “When will You comfort me?” He did not expect the Word in itself to be a sufficient consolation to him, so he looked to the Word as applied by God, the Holy Spirit, the Word as spoken over again by the mouth of God into the silent soul of the waiting Believer. Paul tells us that “the letter kills, but the spirit gives life.” And the Psalmist so far anticipates that Truth of God as to cry to the Lord, “When will You comfort me?”

Christian, I again exhort you to imitate the Psalmist’s example by going to your God for comfort. You are still far too apt to lean upon an arm of flesh, but have you not yet learned what disappointments are always to be met with there? Will you still go to the broken cisterns that can hold no water when they have already only mocked your thirst? When will you give up running to your neighbors and going to your brother’s house in the day of your adversity? You will do far better if you will go to your Father’s house and to your Elder Brother! Even our common proverb says, “Straightforward makes the best runner,” so, run straight to your God! Do not beat around the bush in the hope of getting at God through second causes, but go to the great Fountainhead of all consolation at once. Depend upon it, that the more absolutely you hang upon the bare arm of

 God, the better will it be for you and the more will you learn to live independently of those poor creatures of earth whose breath is in their nostrils! The more you depend upon the great, invisible, Omnipotent, eternal Jehovah, the stronger and happier will you become! Then shall your head be lifted high above your enemies and you shall sing praises unto God for very gladness of heart.

Troubled ones, I urge you to resolve that if you cannot have comfort from God, at any rate you will not have it from the devil—determine that if you cannot do business with Heaven, you will not trade with Hell! And say that you would rather live in a dungeon with God than dwell in tents of ease with Satan. If your life must always be one of sorrow, be content that it shall be so if the Lord so wills it, but be resolved that you never will dally with sin or Satan for the sake of any present consolation. You cannot afford to buy your gold so dearly as that, nor to part with Heaven for the sake of the richest comforts of earth!

It is worthy of note that the Psalmist, even in his worst condition, always expected to be comforted. Our text was probably uttered by the same man who more than once asked himself, “Why are you cast down, O my Soul? And why are you disquieted within me?” Some men readily fall into a state of despair, but the Psalmist was not a man of that sort. When all God’s waves and billows had gone over him, he still said, “Yet the Lord will command His loving kindness in the daytime, and in the night His song shall be with me.” And where deep called unto deep at the noise of Jehovah’s waterspouts, he could still hear the still small voice of hope, so that he said to his soul, “Hope in God: for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.”

Beloved, let none of us give way to despair! No doubt Satan will tell us that it is humble to despair, but it is not so. The pride of despair is truly terrible. I believe that when a man altogether doubts the power of God to save him and gives himself up to sin because he thinks he cannot be saved, so far from there being any humility in it, it is the proudest action that depraved flesh and blood can perform! Man, how dare you say that there is no hope for you? If the iron gates of Hell were shut upon you and God had hurled the key of the Pit into the infinite abyss, then you might say that there was no hope for you. But as long as there trembles in the air that blessed invitation of Christ, “Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,” it is only a lying voice that tells you that there is no hope for you! No hope, Man? Why, if you were in the very jaws of death and the grim monster’s teeth were about to close upon you, there would still be hope for you! The dying thief on the Cross did but trust to the expiring Savior by his side—and that very day he was with his Lord in Paradise! Never despair, Sinner, but trust in Jesus when at your worst!

And as for you, Christian, what have you to do with despairing? Be of good cheer, for your sins are forgiven you. [See Sermon No. 3016, Volume 52—GOOD  
CHEER FROM FORGIVEN SIN—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Even though your eyes fail, God’s eyes do not fail, nor His arm, either. And though you grow weary with your long waiting, yet when He comes to you, He will make amends for that and your weary waiting shall be well repaid. Wait at the posts of His doors, for—

*“He never is before His time,*

*He never is too late.”*  
If you will but play the man and let patience have her perfect work, you shall be well rewarded before long. Therefore wipe away your tears and “wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.”

Now, although the Psalmist expected to receive comfort from the Lord, whatever his trouble might be, yet he was careful to do what he could in order to obtain it. He looked into God’s Word for comfort and he asked the Lord, “When will You comfort me?”—as if he meant to say, “If there is anything on my part which prevents my receiving the comfort, let me know and, Lord, I will put it away from me. Should You be withholding Your consolation from me because of any sin which I am harboring, only say the word, Lord, and my sin shall be taken out to execution! Quick shall be my hand and sudden shall be the stroke, for I must have Your comfort to sustain my soul—I cannot longer live in this state of sadness.”

I trust that this will be the language of anyone here who is seeking the forgiveness of his sins. Perhaps I may be addressing someone who has been seeking mercy for months and he has not yet found it. I hope he is not satisfied to go without it—I trust that he will hunger and thirst until he gets it and that he will, at this moment, put up these requests to God, “Show me, Lord, why You contend with me. When will You comfort me? What is there which parts me from You and hides the light of Your face from my poor, guilty, dying spirit?”

Perhaps the words which I am about to utter, in answer to the question in my text, may be the means of bringing comfort to some who are groping for it in the dark like blind man trying to feel the way marks which they cannot see. I shall first address myself to Christians and then to seekers after salvation.

I. First of all, I SPEAK TO YOU, BELOVED BELIEVERS—to you who are saying with the Psalmist that your eyes are failing from searching the Word of God—to you whose hearts are saying to Him, “When will You comfort us?”

God will answer your question in His own good time and way, but it is certain that God will comfort you one day. He cannot leave His people without comfort. You know that He said, in olden times, by the mouth of the Prophet Isaiah, “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget, yet will I not forget you.” The mother ought not to be able to forget her child when it is in that specially dependent stage of its existence— when it is a sucking child not only her love, but the very force of Nature ought to compel her to remember it! Yet, though she may forget her child, God cannot and will not forget you who are His children! That is impossible—the whole force of His Divine Nature constrains Him in loving kindness to remember you and to say to you, “As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you.” His message to His servants is still, “Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God. Speak comfortably to Jerusalem and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned.” Now, how can comfort be withheld from those whose sins are pardoned? Christian, you must have comfort from your God sooner or later!

To help you to answer your question as to why you do not have that comfort now, consider, in the first place, that God may, of His own Sovereign will and pleasure, withhold from you the comforting light of His Countenance. He has His reason for doing so, but He may not give you that reason. And surely, if He does not tell you the reason, you will submit to His will. Remember the good advice of the Prophet Isaiah, “Who is among you that fears the Lord, that obeys the voice of His servant, that walks in darkness and has no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.” If you do but at last get to Heaven—if the Lord should take away His candle from you on earth for a little time, you may cheerfully submit to that privation! You may cry out to Him, for “His own elect” do that—they “cry day and night unto Him,” yet you must not be impatient if He does not at once grant your request. With ardent desire you may long for Him to comfort you in the night seasons, but, amid the darkest shades, you may still say to Him, “I know, O Lord, that Your judgments are right and that You in faithfulness have afflicted me.” It may be because of Divine Sovereignty that comfort is, for a while, being withheld from you. If so, then the same Sovereignty which shuts you up in the dark room will, in due season, open the door and set you at liberty!

But more likely, dear Friends, you will get comfort when you have cast away your present unbelief. Most of us owe a great part of our sadness to our lack of faith in God. Is it any wonder that you are sad when you will not believe your Heavenly Father’s promises? Child of God, is it a surprising thing that your mind should be ill at ease when you mistrust the veracity of your Father? Would you expect your own children to be happy if they were always doubting the truth of their father’s promises to them? What a wretched household such dark suspicions would soon make! Away, then, with all suspicion of the truth of your Heavenly Father’s promises! It is utterly groundless! It is unworthy of yourself and it is dishonorable to God! Testify against Him now if you can. When did He ever fail you? Has He been a wilderness to you? Has He ever forsaken you? He has chastened you, it is true, but has He ever deserted you? “Come now, testify, O My people; bear witness against Me if you can!” says the Lord. “Have I wearied you with labor? Have I borne you down with burdens and not given you help?” Oh, no! We all bear witness that He is a good and gracious God—and we pray for the Holy Spirit’s power to rest upon us that we may have done with our cruel, wicked, disgraceful unbelief! Come, child of God, take down your Bible, look up some precious promise, grasp it, believe it and expect to see it fulfilled to yourself! You will not then have long to ask, “When will You comfort me?” You will be comforted as soon as you have cast away your sinful unbelief from your soul. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to do so at once!

Possibly the answer to your question may take another form— The Lord will comfort you as soon as you have done with complaining. There are certain people in the world whom God will never comfort until He has taken their present murmuring spirit out of them. I know some such people, to my sorrow. If they prosper very much, if they get on a great deal in their business, they say, “Oh, yes, we have had a tolerably good year!” They never admit that they have had anything beyond “a tolerably good year.” That is all that they will say even when their money is rolling in, in floods! Many a farmer, when his ground is bearing as much corn as it possibly can, says, “Yes, I shall do pretty middling this year.” He calls the very best that he can possibly have, “pretty middling!” And if he should happen to have a little loss, or a little trouble, or some little vexation, then straightway his mouth is filled with murmuring against God. And though he would not like to have it called by that name, yet it is a sort of minor blasphemy against the Most High—envying others, speaking of them as though they had all the sweets of life and talking of himself as though he had to drink all the bitters and all the dregs of the cup. Some of you know people of that kind, who seem to be “cut on the cross”—a strange sort of people who can always see clouds on the finest day and who will say that the grass is all dried up even when all can see that it is beautifully green!

Ah, my dear Friends, you must get rid of all this if you want God to comfort you! There is something expressive in that word, murmur—I have often wondered at the wisdom of the man who gave it the meaning that it has, though I do not know who he was. “Mur-mur”—two ugly little syllables such as any cross child could easily sound! But it is a childish, foolish, wicked habit for any of us to fall into—to be murmuring against God—for, after all, our mercies far outnumber our sorrows! As long as we are out of Hell, we have no right to complain, for, if we had received our just desserts, we would have been there. Dear Friends, may God help you to shake off this murmuring spirit as Paul shook the viper off his hand into the fire! And when you have done that, then you will probably find that the Lord will speedily appear to comfort your heart!

Again, in some persons there is an absence of Divine Consolation because there is some sin which is tolerated within them. There might be very startling discoveries made here, this very hour, if every professing Christian were compelled, by his accusing conscience, to stand up and tell the congregation what his secret, besetting sin is. I fear that at least some of you would never dare to show your faces in the Tabernacle again—you would be ashamed to be seen among those who knew such things about you! Yet the smoke of these burning sins rises in clouds and shuts the face of God away from such inconsistent Christians. God loves His people, but He does not love their sins. Sin is hateful anywhere, but it is most hateful in the Lord’s own people. You are, none of you, fond of loathsome diseases such as fevers, but I am sure that you loathe the fever most of all when it attacks your own dear child. So, sin is a disease which God hates everywhere, but He hates it most of all when He sees it upon one of His own children and, for this reason, He takes His rod into His hand and causes His sinning child to smart and to cry out with Job, “Show me why You contend with me.” When the Lord’s people are really in earnest about this matter, He points to their idol-gods, or to some other evil thing which they have harbored in their hearts and so awakened His anger. Then, if they arise and cast out these abominations, the rod is put away and God once more gives them the comforts of His Grace. Therefore, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ, if you lack comfort, search and see where the fault lies, for it is my firm conviction that in nine cases out of ten, it is owing to some sin that has been indulged! I quoted Job’s question just now, and Eliphaz asked him, “Are the consolations of God small with you? Is there any secret thing with you? Why does your heart carry you away? And what do your eyes wink at, that you turn your spirit against God and let such words go out of your mouth?” I pass those searching questions on to anyone here to whom they may apply. And I trust that as the result of doing so, such a soul will be able to present the poet’s petition with the poet’s confidence—

*“The dearest idol I have known,  
Whatever that idol be,  
Help me to tear it from Your Throne,  
And worship only Thee!  
So shall my walk be close with God,  
Calm and serene my frame,  
So purer light shall mark the road  
That leads me to the Lamb.”*

Possibly the lack of comfort is owing to some other cause. Dear Christian Brother or Sister, you may be at this moment without comfort because you have neglected some duty. I believe that many of God’s people who know their Lord’s will, yet do it not, do get beaten with many stripes. They say that they do not understand why they are thus chastised and they do not know what it is that causes them to be so frequently and so sorely afflicted. It is because there is some precept, which they know to be their Lord’s precept, yet they wink their eye at it and leave it neglected. Learn a lesson from Jonah’s experience. If the Lord should bid any of us go to Nineveh and cry against it and, instead of doing so, we go down to Joppa and find a ship going to Tarshish, and get in it, we must not reckon upon having a smooth passage! Before long there will be “a mighty tempest in the sea.” If we had not been God’s servant, there might have been fair weather—but when a child of God runs away from his plain duty, God will send a tempest after him—and he may be very thankful if God also sends a whale—for although the whale may swallow him, yet it may bring him safely to land—but he will be sure to rue the day on which he turned away from his clear duty and sought out a more comfortable path.

Master John Bunyan, whom I cannot help quoting, tells us the result of Christian and Hopeful going over the stile into By-Path Meadow. They thought it would be much smother walking just on the other side of the fence and Christian tried to assure his companion that the path ran along by the way-side. No doubt they thought that they could keep so close to the King’s Highway that they would see, in a minute, when the path began to turn away from the right road—and then they would just jump over the fence and get into the right way again. They felt sure it would be all right. At least Christian did, for Hopeful was doubtful all the while, though he gave way to his older companion. But when Giant Despair found them sleeping in his grounds, he drove them off into his dungeon and came, the next morning, with a great crab-tree cudgel and gave them not a mouthful of bread, nor a drink of water, but plenty of crab tree! And when, the day after, he counseled them to destroy themselves, and left them lying, day after day, pining in their filthy prison—then they understood that smooth walking is not always safe walking, and that it is best to walk in the right road even though it may be a rough one! Let us be careful where we walk, for we may lose our comfort very speedily unless we keep strictly to the path of obedience. Let us, at all times, with a cheerful and willing spirit, wear our Master’s yoke, for His yoke is easy and His burden is light.

I will speak very plainly to some of you who get downhearted and desponding, for I am rather glad that you do get into such a state of mind. There are some who think that the blame rests with the preacher if they become despondent. They say that he ought to comfort them more than he does. Ah, but lazy professors must remember what Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, “This we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.” As for you busy preachers, Sunday school teachers, tract-distributors and other earnest workers for Christ, when you do get to a sermon, how sweet it is to you! You have been hard at work for the Lord and it has sharpened your spiritual appetites! But lazy Christians who never fail to win souls for the Savior and who only want to be spiritually fed without doing a stroke of work in the Master’s service get to be very dainty. No matter how good the fare may be, nor however much others enjoy it, they are sure to say, “That is not the food that we like.” They want it spiced up to a wonderful degree and it must be carved so daintily or they will not touch it! Whereas if they had been hard at work, they would have gained a healthy appetite which would have turned even the bitters into sweets!

I pray God that those professors who do nothing for Him may be miserable! “That is a very unkind prayer,” say some of you. No, it is not, for it is meant for your good. See, if you get to be happy in your idleness, you will stay in that sinful state. But if you are unhappy while you are doing nothing for the Master, I think you will be the more likely to say to Him, “Lord, what will You have me to do?” Then I hope you will soon get to work and I believe that comfort will be sure to come to you when, in an evangelical spirit, depending upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, you go out to do what you can for the Lord! Some of you, perhaps, have a great heap of money stored up and you cannot make out why there is such a bad smell of canker all over the house—I could tell you! Some of you who have not been doing anything for your Master for a long while, think that surely your blood must be congealed in your veins, for it does not seem to move! I think I could tell you why that is. If you would again exercise yourself in God’s work, as you used to do, you would soon find that the blood would again course through your veins and that the dew of your spiritual youth would come back to you. Our sorrows are often manufactured by our sins—our sins of omission, or of commission. May we all have Grace, then, to search within ourselves to see if we can discover the answer to the question, “When will You comfort me?”

II. Now I am going, for a few minutes, to deal with THE CASE OF ANXIOUS, SEEKING SINNERS.  
Where are you, anxious one? Never mind where you my happen to be at this moment—let the Word of the Lord come straight to you as though nobody else were here! You are sorrowfully saying, “I have been praying for pardon for months. I am in the House of God whenever it is open. I search the Bible as diligently as I can, yet I cannot find comfort. Oh, that I could get my sins forgiven! I must get that blessing, or I shall die. Tell me, Sir, when will God comfort me?”  
My dear Hearer, it may be that comfort is withheld from you because you have not fully confessed your sin. We have God’s Word for it that “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” Then if we do not make a complete confession to our God, we must not expect to receive pardon. “Oh,” you say, “I have said, ‘Lord, I am a sinner.’” That is right, but you must do more than that. Tonight, before you go to bed, think over your past life. Recapitulate your faults and confess the whole of them to God—and do not keep anything back. I have heard of a professor who was guilty of backsliding for a time and, therefore, was suspended from church membership. He prayed about the matter, but he used to pray thus, “Lord, you know that I have indulged a little—have mercy upon me!” Of course no comfort came to him. Then a Christian Brother said to him, “Tell the Lord the whole truth—He knows just what it is.” The man was wise enough to follow this good advice, so he prayed, “Lord, you know that I was drunk, will you not forgive me, for Jesus Christ’s sake?” Then the comfort came to him and you, also, must call your sin just what it is when you go before God, for you are not truly humbled and penitent as long as you try to put a gloss upon your sin. David could get no peace till he prayed, “Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God.” And, my dear Hearer, you must confess the worst aspect of your case before God. “Make a clean breast of it,” as we commonly say—tell the Lord all about your sin. Perhaps it is the lack of this that keeps you from being comforted—the lack of an explicit, plain, full confession of your sins.

Again, if you ask me why you do not have comfort, although you do try to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, I answer, Perhaps there is some sin that you have not given up and, depend upon it, if that is the case, although salvation is all by the Grace of God and we are not saved by our own works, yet, Sinner, you can never have peace with God till you have made a clean sweep of every known sin! There may be a man here who has attended the Tabernacle for a long time, and who says that he cannot get peace. Now, where was he last night? His conscience knows and I will ask him whether he expects to get peace with God while he can be found in such society? There is another man here who says that he cannot get comfort—but where is he to be found the greater part of the week? Does he not regularly go to the gin-palace? And can he expect that the Lord Jesus Christ will go there with him? No, that cannot be! There was no room for Christ in the inn when He was born and there is certainly no room for Him in the gin-palace of the present day. There are some men who can cheat in their business—they know very well that they do not deal fairly with their customers. Their goods are adulterated and they give short weight—yet they expect to have peace with God while this is the case? How can it be? Do you suppose that God will patch up a truce with your sins and give you His forgiveness while you are harboring such evil things in your house? No, that cannot be! Though you cannot be perfect, yet you must want to be perfect and there must not be any sin which you knowingly spare. Cut them in pieces, every one of them! As soon as you know that anything is wrong, I pray you to have such a tender conscience that you will seek to escape from it, for, as long as you harbor even one of them, comfort will never come to you.  
“But this is such a little sin,” says one. Yes, and those little errors are like the little boys that the big thieves take with them to crawl through the little windows—and then they open the door and let the big thieves in! Those little sins will be your ruin unless you forsake them and get them forgiven! One of our proverbs says, “Take care of the pence, and the pounds will take care of themselves.” Turn that proverb round and it will teach you that if you look sharply after your little sins, you will not fall into great ones. It is these so-called little sins—mixing with worldly society, going into bad company and so on—that keep so many of you from getting peace with God! Some of you young women get to walking with ungodly young men. And some of you young men form acquaintances that are no good to you. And then you come here and your consciences are somewhat touched, and you ask that you may be found “accepted in the Beloved.” How can that be when you will walk straight away from this service and talk in such a way as would be impossible if the Holy Spirit were really in you? The Holy Dove would fly away from such talk as that! A defiled heart is no nest wherein He can take His rest.  
Once again, is it not very likely that the reason why you do not get peace with God is this—that you have not trusted to the Lord Jesus Christ wholly and entirely? There is the root of the mischief! You still hope to save yourself in some measure and, as long as you cling to a rag of selfrighteousness, you cannot get peace or comfort! If ever a Sinner is to be saved, it must be entirely by the mercy of God shown to him solely because of the merit of Jesus Christ and, as long as a man puts so much as a shadow of a trust in himself beside his trust in Christ, his comfort will be marred! You must be to yourself as though you were dead, so far as any confidence in yourself is concerned—and you must rest alone in Jesus. The finished work of the exalted Redeemer must be your only confidence!  
“How was it, Sam,” asked a Christian master of his servant, “that when you and I were both under conviction of sin, you got comfort so much sooner than I did? As far as I know, Sam, my life seemed to be as good as yours before conviction came to me, yet I could not get comfort, though you did.” “Ah,” said Sam, “you see, Master, I was a great deal worse than you were. And when God the Holy Spirit showed me what I was, I looked at my rags and I said, ‘Ah, they are nothing but a lot of filthy rags, they will never patch up.’ So I took them off at once and I put on the robe of Jesus Christ’s righteousness, for I knew my rags would never match that spotless garment of His. But, Master, when you got a little light, you looked at yourself and you had been so good—you had lived such a decent life that you said—‘Ah, my coat needs mending. There is a hole in the elbow and a tear here and there, but it can be patched up and it shall do a little longer.’ And so, Master, you did not got the robe of Christ’s righteousness as quickly as I did.” And some of you moral people will have hard work in fighting against your selfrighteousness. When good Mr. Hervey questioned a godly farmer as to what was the greatest hindrance to a sinner’s coming to Christ, he thought the farmer would say, “Sinful self,” but he said, “Righteous self,” and so it is. Righteous self-confidence in our prayers. Self-confidence in our repentance, self-confidence in something we mean to do, or something we feel that we already have—all this keeps us back from true peace and comfort!  
All the candles in the world will not enable us to do without the sun. Some of you light your poor little candles and try to get comfort that way. Put the extinguisher on every one of them and go and stand in the sunshine, for then you will have light indeed! Give up all your carnal hopes, your earthly confidences, your good works, your own righteousnesses—away with them all—and come as poor, guilty, condemned sinners and trust in Jesus Christ, and you shall get comfort this very instant, for, the moment a sinner trusts in Jesus Christ, he is saved! Peace and pardon immediately follow trust in Jesus! Only come to Him with your sins and miseries, your burdens and your unworthiness, your hardness of heart and your coldness of spirit—come to Him just as you are, for, “He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.” The Lord Jesus is a Physician who heals the sick when their disease is at its worst—He does not want you to try to make yourselves better, but to come to Him just as you are—and then He will heal you as you are.  
That was a beautiful act on the part of the Good Samaritan who found the poor wounded man half dead by the roadside. He did not stand and gaze at his injuries, and say to him, “My dear fellow, when your wounds are less painful to you, I will come back and bind them up.” He did not say to him, “My dear man, when you are more conscious of your need of my services, and can sit up and ask me to help you, I will do what I can for you.” He did not say, “My dear man, when you are very sorry that you ever came down this dangerous road where you have been waylaid and injured, I will come and heal you.” Oh, no! There the poor man lay, half dead, and the Good Samaritan went just where he was, stooped over him and looked at his wounds. Probably the man did not feel anything just then, for most likely he had been stunned, but the Good Samaritan felt for him. The man could not plead for himself, but the heart of the Good Samaritan pleaded for him—and he tenderly bound up his gaping wounds, pouring in oil and wine—and lifted him up, set him on his own beast, carried him to the inn and there did all he could to ensure the completion of his cure. As the Good Samaritan went to the wounded man where he was, so Jesus Christ, “the Good Samaritan” in the highest sense of the term, comes to the sinner where he or she is!  
But, Sinners, though you are trying to make your hearts ready for Christ, you will never succeed in doing it! You are wasting your strength upon a task that must end in failure. Remember that if you cannot come to Christ with a broken heart, you can come to Him for a broken heart! If you cannot come as you ought, come just as you are! And if you have no good thing to plead as a reason for your acceptance, so much the better will it be for you.  
I have tried to put this matter of finding comfort plainly and in as simple language as I could. O Sacred Spirit, come now, and bring sinners to Jesus, for His dear name’s sake! Amen.

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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A BOTTLE IN THE SMOKE  
NO. 71

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 23, 1856, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

**“For I have become like a bottle in the smoke;  
yet I do not forget Your statutes.”  
Psalm 119:83.**

THE figure of “a bottle in the smoke” is essentially oriental. We must, therefore, go to the East for its explanation. This we will supply to our hearers and readers in the words of the Author of the Pictorial Bible— “This doubtless refers to a leather bottle of kid or goatskin. The peasantry of Asia keep many articles, both dry and liquid, in such bottles, which, for security, are suspended from the roof, or hung against the walls of their humble dwellings. Here they soon become quite black with smoke, for as in the dwellings of the peasantry, there are seldom any chimneys and the smoke can only escape through an aperture in the roof, or by the door. Therefore the apartment is full of dense smoke whenever a fire is kindled in it. And in those nights and days when the smokiness of the hovels in which we daily rested during a winter’s journey in Persia, Armenia and Turkey, seemed to make the cold and weariness of actual travel a relief, we had ample occasion to observe the peculiar blackness of such skin vessels, arising from the manner in which substances offering a surface of this sort, receive the full influence of the smoke and detain the minute particles of soot which rest upon them. When such vessels do not contain liquids and are not quite filled by the solids which they hold, they contract a shrunk and shriveled appearance to which the Psalmist may also possibly allude as well as to the blackness. But we presume that the leading idea refers to the latter circumstance, as in the East,

 blackness has an opposite significance to the felicitous meaning of whiteness. David had doubtless seen bottles of this description hanging up in his tent when a wanderer and though he might have had but few in his palace, yet in the cottages of his own poor people, he had, no doubt, witnessed them. Hence he says of himself, ‘I have become,’ by trouble and affliction, by trial and persecution, ‘like a bottle in the smoke; yet I do not forget Your statutes.’”

First, God’s people have there trials—they get put in the smoke. Secondly, God’s people feel their trials—they “become like a bottle in the smoke.” Thirdly, God’s people do not forget God’s statutes in their trials—

“I have become like a bottle in the smoke; yet I do not forget Your statutes.”

I. GOD’S PEOPLE HAVE THEIR TRIALS. This is an old truth, as old as the everlasting hills, because trials were in the Covenant and certainly the Covenant is as old as the eternal mountains! It was never designed by God, when He chose His people, that they should be an untried people—that they should be chosen to peace and safety, to perpetual happiness here below and freedom from sickness and the pains of mortality. But rather, on the other hand, when He made the Covenant, He made the rod of the Covenant, too! When He drew up the charter of privileges, He also drew up the charter of chastisements. When He gave us the roll of heirship, He put down the rods among the things to which we should inevitably be heirs! Trials are a part of our lot. They were predestinated for us in God’s solemn decrees. And as surely as the stars are fashioned by His hands and He has fixed their orbits, so surely are our trials weighed in scales. He has predestinated their season and their place, their intensity and the effect they shall have upon us. Good men must never expect to escape troubles. If they do, they shall be disappointed— none of their predecessors have escaped them—

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

Mark Job, of whose patience you have heard. Read you well of Abraham, for he had his trials and by his faith under them, when he offered up Isaac, he became, “the father of the faithful.” Note well the biographies of all the Patriarchs, of all the Prophets, of all the Apostles and martyrs, and you shall discover none of those, whom God made vessels of mercy, who were not hung up like bottles in the smoke! It is ordained of old that the cross of trouble should be engraved on every vessel of mercy as the royal mark whereby the king’s vessels of honor are distinguished. As surely as we are born, we are born to trouble, even as the sparks fly upwards. And when born-again, it does seem as if we had a birth to double trouble! And double toil and trouble come to the man who has double Grace and double mercy bestowed upon him. Good men must have their trials—they must expect to be like bottles in the smoke!

Sometimes these trials arise from the poverty of their condition. It is the bottle in the cottage which gets into the smoke, not the bottle in the palace. The Queen’s plate knows nothing of smoke. We have seen at Windsor how carefully it is preserved. It knows nothing of trial, no hands are allowed to touch that, so as to injure it, although even it may be stolen by accident when the guards are not careful over it. Still, it was not intended to be subject to smoke. It is the bottle in the tent of the poor Arab that dwells in the smoke. So with God’s poor people. They must expect to have smoke in their dwellings. We would suppose that smoke does not enter into the house of the rich, although even then our supposition would be false. But certainly we must suppose there is more smoke where the chimney is ill built and the home is altogether of bad construction. It is the poverty of the Arab that puts his bottle in the smoke—so the poverty of Christians exposes them to much trouble and in as much as God’s people are, for the most part, poor, for that reason must they always be, for the most part, in affliction. We shall not find many of God’s people in the higher ranks. Not many of them shall ever be illustrious in this world. Until happier times come, when kings shall be their nursing fathers and queens their nursing mothers, it must still be true, that, “God has chosen the poor in this world, rich in faith, that they should be heirs of the kingdom.” Poverty has its privileges, for Christ has lived in it! But it has its ills—it has its smoke, it has its trials. You know not, sometimes, how you shall be provided for. You are often pinched for food and raiment, you are vexed with anxious cares, you wonder from where tomorrow’s food shall come and where you shall obtain your daily supplies. It is because of your poverty that you are hung up like a bottle in the smoke.

Many of God’s people, however, are not poor. And even if they are, poverty does not occasion so much trouble to them as some suppose—for God, in the midst of poverty, makes His children very glad and so cheers their hearts in the cottage that they scarcely know whether it is a palace or a hovel! Yes, He does send such sweet music across the waters of their woe, that they know not whether they are on dry land or not!

But there are other trials—and this brings us to remark that our trials frequently result from our comforts. What makes the smoke? Why, it is the fire by which the Arab warms his hands, that smokes his bottle and smokes him, too! So, Beloved, our comforts usually furnish us with troubles. It is the law of Nature that there should never be a good without having an ill connected with it. What if the stream fertilizes the land? It can sometimes drown the inhabitants! What if the fire cheer us? Does it not frequently consume our dwellings? What if the sun enlightens us? Does he not sometimes scorch and smite us with his heat? What if the rain brings forth our food and causes the flowers to blossom on the face of the earth? Does it not also break the young blossom from the trees and cause many diseases? There is nothing good without its ill—there is no fire without its smoke! The fire of our comfort will always have the smoke of trial with it. You will find it so, if you study the comforts you have in your own family. You have relations. Mark you—every relationship engenders its trial and every fresh relationship upon which you enter opens to you, at one time, certainly, a new source of joys, but infallibly also a new source of sorrows! Are you parents? Your children are your joy. But those children cause you some smoke, because you fear lest they should not be brought up in “the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” And it may be, when they come to riper years, that they will grieve your spirits—God grant they may not break your hearts by their sins! You have wealth. Well, that has its joys with it. But still, has it not its trials and its troubles? Has not the rich man more to care for than the poor? He who has nothing, sleeps soundly, for the thief will not molest him. But he who has abundance often trembles lest the rough wind should blow down that which he has built—lest the rude storm should wreck that argosy laden with his gold—lest an overwhelming and sudden turn in the tide of commerce should sweep away his speculations and destroy his hopes!

Just as the birds that visit us fly away from us, so do our joys bring sorrow with them. In fact, joy and sorrow are twins. The blood which runs in the veins of sorrow, runs in the veins of joy, too. For what is the blood of sorrow—is it not the tear? And what is the blood of joy? When we are full of joy do we not weep? Ah, that we do. The same drop which expresses joy is sorrow’s own emblem! We weep for joy and we weep for sorrow. Our fire gives smoke to tell us that our comforts have their trials with them. Brothers and Sisters, you have extraordinary fires which others have never kindled—expect then to have extraordinary smoke! You have the Presence of Christ. But then you will have the smoke of fear, lest you should lose it. You have the promise of God’s Word—there is the fire of it—but you have the smoke, sometimes, when you read it without the illumination of God’s Spirit. You have the joy of assurance. But you also have the smoke of doubt which blows into your eyes and well near blinds you! You have your trials, and your trials arise from your comforts. The more comfort you have, the more fire you have, the more sorrows shall you have and the more smoke!

Again—the ministry is the great fire by which Christian men warm their hands. But the ministry has much smoke with it. How often have you come to this House of God and had your spirits lifted up! But perhaps as often you have come here to be cast down! Your harp strings, at times, have been all loose. You could not play a tune of joy upon them— you have come here and Christ tuned your harp so that it could awake, “like David’s harp of solemn sound.” But at other times you have come here and had all the rejoicings removed from you by some solemn searching sermon. Last Sabbath-Day how many of you there were like bottles in the smoke! This pulpit, which is intended at times to give you fire, is also intended to have smoke with it. It would not be God’s pulpit if no smoke issued from it. When God made Sinai His pulpit, Sinai was altogether on a smoke! You have often been like bottles in the smoke—the smoke caused by the fire of God’s own kindling, the fire of the Gospel ministry!

I think, however, that David had one more thought. The poor bottle in the smoke stays there for a long time, till it gets black. It is not just one puff of smoke that comes upon it. The smoke is always going up, always girding the poor bottle. It lives in an atmosphere of smoke. So, Beloved, some of us hang up like bottles in the smoke for months, or for a whole year. No sooner do you get out of one trouble than you tumble into another! No sooner do you get up one hill than you have to mount another! It seems to be all up hill to Heaven with you. You feel that John Bunyan is right in his ditty—“A Christian is seldom long at ease. When one trouble’s gone, another does him seize.” You are always in the smoke. You are linked, perhaps, with an ungodly partner. Or perhaps you are of a singular temperament and your temperament naturally puts clouds and darkness round about you so that you are always in the smoke. Well, Beloved, that was the condition of David. He was not just, sometimes, in trial—it seemed as if trials came to him every day! Each day had its cares. Each hour carried on its wings some fresh tribulation. Instead of bringing joy, each moment did but toll the knell of happiness and bring another grief. Well, if this is your case, fear not, you are not alone in your trials—but you see the truth of what is uttered here—you have become like bottles in the smoke.

II. This brings us to the second point—CHRISTIANS FEEL THEIR TROUBLES. They are in the smoke. And they are like bottles in the smoke. There are some things that you might hang up in the smoke for many a day and they would never be much changed because they are so black, now, that they could never be made any blacker. They are so shriveled, now, that they never could become any worse. But the poor skin bottle shrivels up in the heat, gets blacker and shows at once the effect of the smoke. It is not an unfeeling thing, like a stone—it is at once affected! Now, some men think that Divine Grace makes a man unable to feel suffering. I have heard people insinuate that the martyrs did not endure much pain when they were being burned to death—but this is a mistake—Christians are not like stones. They are like bottles in the smoke. In fact, if there is any difference, a Christian feels his trials more than another because he traces them to God and that makes them more acute, as coming from the God whom he loves. But at the same time, I grant you, it makes them more easy to bear because he believes they will work the comfortable fruits of righteousness! A dog will bite the stone that is thrown at it, but a man would resent the injury on the man that threw the stone. Stupid, foolish, carnal unbelief quarrels with the trial. But faith goes into the Court of King’s Bench at once and asks its God, “Why do You contend with me?” But even faith, itself, does not avert the pain of the chastisement—it enables us to endure it—but it does not remove the trial. The Christian is not wrong in giving way to his feelings— did not his Master shed tears when Lazarus was dead? And did He not, when on the Cross, utter the exceedingly bitter cry, “My God! My God! Why have You forsaken Me?”

Our Heavenly Father never intended to take away our griefs when under trial. He does not put us beyond the reach of the flood, but builds us an ark in which we float until the water is ultimately controlled and we rest on the Mount Ararat of Heaven forever! God takes not His people to an Elysium where they become impervious to painful feelings—but He gives us Grace to endure our trials and to sing His praises while we suffer, “I have become like a bottle in the smoke.”

The trial that we do not feel is no trial at all . I remember a remarkable case of assault and battery that was tried sometime ago. I knew a friend who happened to be in court. It was a most singular affair. For when the prosecutor was requested to state in what the assault consisted, he said, in curious English, “Ah, Sir, he struck me a most tremendous blow.” “Well, but where did he strike you?” “Well, Sir, he did not hit me. It only just grazed me.” Of course the judge said here was no assault and battery, because there was no real blow struck. So we sometimes meet with persons who say, “I could bear that trial if it did not touch my feelings.” Of course you could, for then it would be no trial at all! Suppose a man were to see his house and property burned? Would you call it a trial, if he could do as Sheridan did, when his theater was burned? He went to a house opposite and sat down drinking and jokingly said, “Surely, every man has a right to sit and warm his hands by his own fireside.” It is feeling a trial that makes it a trial. The essence of the trial lies in my feeling it. And God intended His trials to be felt! His rods are not made of wheat straw—they are made of true birch. And His blows fall just where we feel them. He does not strike us on the iron plates of our armor. He smites us where we are sure to be affected.

And yet more— trials which are not felt are unprofitable trials. If there is no blueness in the wound, then the soul is not made better. If there is no crying out, then there will be no emptying out of our depravity. It is just so much as we feel that we are profited! A trial unfelt must be a trial unsanctified. A trial under which we do not feel at all cannot be a blessing to us because we are only blessed by feeling it, under the agency of God’s Holy Spirit. Christian men and women, do not blush because you are like a bottle in the smoke—because you are sensitive under affliction—for so you ought to be! Do not let others say you ought not to feel it so much, because your husband is dead, or your child is dead, or you have lost your property! Just tell them that you know you ought, for God sent the trouble that you might feel it. (Not excessively and murmur against God) but that you might feel the rod and then kiss it. That is patience—not when we do not feel—but when we feel it and say, “Though He slays me, yet will I trust in Him.” “I am like a bottle in the smoke.”

Now, a bottle, when it is in the smoke, gets very black—so does the Christian—when he is in the smoke of trial, or in the smoke of the Gospel ministry, or the smoke of persecution—gets very black in his own esteem. It is marvelous how bright we are when everything goes right with us. But it is equally marvelous how black we get when a little tribulation comes upon us! We think very well of ourselves while there is no smoke. But let the smoke come and it reveals the blackness of our hearts. Trials teach us what we are. They dig up the soil and let us see what we are made of. They turn up some of the ill weeds on the surface. They are good for this reason—they make us know our blackness!

A bottle, too, that hangs up in the smoke, will become very useless. So do we, often, when we are under a trying ministry, or a trying Providence, feel that we are very useless. We feel good for nothing, like a bottle that has been hung up in the smoke that nobody will ever drink out of any more, because it will smoke everything that is put in it. We feel that we are of no use to anybody—that we are poor unprofitable creatures! In our joys we are honorable creatures. We scarcely think the Creator could do without us—but when we are in trouble, we feel, “I am a worm and no man”—good for nothing! Let me die. I have become useless, as well as black, “like a bottle in the smoke.”

And then a bottle in the smoke is an empty bottle. It would not have been hung up in the smoke unless it had been empty. And very often under trials how empty we become. We are full enough in our joys. But the smoke and heat soon dry every atom of moisture out of us. All our hope is gone, all our strength is departed—we then feel that we are empty sinners and need a full Christ to save us. We are like bottles in the smoke.

Have I described any of your characters? I dare say some of you are like bottles in the smoke. You feel your trials. You have a soft, tender heart and the arrows of the Almighty stick fast in it. You are like a piece of seaweed, affected by every change of the weather. Not like a piece of rock, that might be hung up and would never change—you are capable of being affected and it is quite right you should be—you have “become like a bottle in the smoke.”

III. And now, Beloved, the third and blessed thought is that CHRISTIANS, THOUGH THEY HAVE TROUBLES AND FEEL THEIR TROUBLES, DO NOT, IN THEIR TROUBLES, FORGET GOD’S STATUTES.

What are God’s statutes? God has two kinds of statutes, both of them engraved in eternal brass. The first are the statutes of His commands. And of these He has said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but not one jot or tittle of the Law shall fail till all is fulfilled.” These statutes are like the statutes of the Medes and Persians. They are binding upon all His people. His precepts are a light and easy yoke. But they are ones which no man must cast from his shoulders. All must carry the commands of Christ and all who hope to be saved by Him must take up his cross daily and follow Him. Well, the Psalmist said, “In the midst of my trials I have not swerved from Your statutes. I have not attempted to violate Your commands. I have not in any way moved from the strict path of integrity. And in the midst of all my persecutions, I have gone straight on, never once forgetting God’s statutes or commands.” And then again— there are statutes of promise, which are equally firm, each of them as immortal as God who uttered them! David did not forget these. For he said of them, “Your statutes have been my song in the house of my pilgrimage.” And he could not have sung about them if he had forgotten them!

Why was it David still held fast to God’s statutes? First of all, David was not a bottle in the fire, or else he would have forgotten them. Our trials are smoke, but not fire. They are very uncomfortable, but they do not consume us. In other parts of Scripture, the figure of fire may be applied to our trials, but here it would not be appropriate because the bottle would be burned up if it were in the fire. But the Christian may say, “True, it is all smoke round about me. but there is nothing which tends to burn up my piety. Smoke may dim my evidence, but it cannot burn it. It may and certainly will be obnoxious to my eyes and nose and all my senses, but it cannot burn my limbs. It may stop my breath and prevent my drinking in the pure air of Heaven, but it cannot consume my lungs and burn the vital parts of my body.” Ah, it is well for you, O Christian, that there is more smoke than fire in your trials! And there is no cause why you should forget your God in your troubles. They may have a tendency to drive you from Him, but like great waves, they often wash the driftwood of the poor lost boats upon the beach of God’s love! And the mast that might have floated out to sea and been carried—no one knows where—is often stranded on the shore and there once more is made to do fresh service. So are you, Christian, washed on shore by the waves of your trouble! But never are you washed away by them. “I have not forgotten Your statutes.”

Another reason why, when David was in the smoke, he did not forget God’s statutes was this—Jesus Christ was in the smoke with him and the statutes were in the smoke with him, too. God’s statutes have been in the fire, as well as God’s people. Both the promise and the precept are in the furnace. And if I hang up in the smoke, like a bottle, I see hanging up by my side, God’s commands, covered with soot and smoke, subject to the same perils. Suppose I am persecuted—it is a comfort to know that men do not persecute

 me, but my Master’s Truth! It is a singular thing with regard to all the envenomed shafts that have been hurled at me—that they have generally fallen on that part of my frame which is most invulnerable—because they have generally fallen on something I have quoted from somebody else or proved from Scripture. They may go on. It is sweet to think that Jesus Christ is in the smoke as well as we are. And the more flame there is, the better we shall be able to see our Master in the smoke with us—

*“By God’s command wherever I stray,  
Sorrow attends me all the way,  
A never failing Friend!  
And if my sufferings may augment  
Your praise, behold me well content—  
Let sorrow still attend!  
It costs me no regret, that she  
Who followed Christ should follow me!  
And though wherever she goes,  
Thorns spring spontaneous at her feet,  
I love her and extract a sweet  
From all my bitter woes.”*

Another reason why David did not forget the statutes was they were in the soul, where the smoke does not enter. Smoke does not enter the interior of the bottle. It only affects the exterior. So it is with God’s children— the smoke does not enter into their hearts. Christ is there and Grace is there and Christ and Grace are both unaffected by the smoke. Come up, clouds of smoke! Curl upward till you envelop me! Still will I hang on the Nail, Christ Jesus—that sure Nail which can never be moved from its place! And I will feel that “while the outward man decays, the inward man is renewed day by day.” And the statutes being there, I do not forget them, “For I have become like a bottle in the smoke; yet I do not forget Your statutes.”

To such of you as can join with David, let me give a word of consolation. If you have been persecuted and still hold fast by God’s Word—if you have been afflicted and still persevere in the knowledge of our Lord and Master—you have every reason to believe yourself a Christian! If under your trials and troubles you remain just what you were when at ease, you may then hope, and not only so, but steadfastly believe and be assured that you are a child of God! Some of you, however, are very much like Christians when you hear sermons full of promises—when I preach to you about bruised reeds, or address you with the invitation, “Come unto Me, all you that labor.” But when I give you a smoky sermon—one which you cannot endure—if you then, can say, “Guilty, weak and helpless I may be, but still I fall into His arms. Sinful I know I am and I have grave cause for doubt, but still—

*‘There, there, unshaken will I rest,  
Till this vile body dies.’*

I know, poor, weak and helpless though I am, that I have a rich Almighty Friend.” If you can stand a little smoke, then you may believe yourself to be a child of God. But there are some people we know of who are shocked with a very puff of smoke—they cannot endure it, they go out at once— just like rats out of the hold of a ship when they begin to smoke it. But if you can live in the smoke and say, “I feel it and can still endure it”—if you can stand a smoky sermon and endure a smoky trial and hold fast to God under a smoky persecution, then you have reason to believe that you are certainly a child of God! Fair-weather birds! You are good for nothing! It is the stormy birds who are God’s favorites! He loves the birds that can swim in the tempest. He loves those who can move in the storm and, like the eagle, companion of the lightning flash, can make the wind their chariot and ride upon forked flames of fire! If in the heat of battle, when your helmet is bruised by some powerful enemy, you can still hold up your head and say, “I know whom I have believed,” and do not swerve from your post, then you are, verily, a child of Heaven! For constancy, endurance and perseverance are the true marks of a hero of the Cross and of the invincible warriors of the Lord! Those are no invincible ships that flee away before a storm. He is no brave warrior who hears reports from others that a fort is impregnable and dares not attack it. But he is brave who dashes his ship beneath the guns, or runs her well-near aground and gives broadside after broadside with a desperate velour against his foe! He who in the smoke and the tempest, in the clamor and roar of the battle, can yet coolly give his commands and, knowing that every man is expected to do his duty, can fight valiantly—he is a brave commander, he is a true soldier! He shall receive from his Master a crown of glory. O Christian! Cleave to your Master in the smoke! Hold onto your Lord in trials and you shall be refined by your afflictions! You shall exceedingly increase and be profited beyond measure!

However, I have some here who can consume their own smoke. There are some of my congregation who, when they have any trials, can manage to get over them very well, themselves. They say, “Well, I don’t care! You seem to be a sad set of simpletons, you feel everything. But as for me, it all rolls off and I don’t care for anything.” No, I dare say you don’t. But the time will come when you will find the truth of that little story you used to read when you were children, that “don’t care” came to a very bad end! These persons are not like bottles in the smoke, but like pieces of wood hanging over it. But they will find there is something more than smoke, by-and-by. They will come to a place where there is not only smoke, but fire!. And though they can endure the smoke of this world’s troubles, they will find it not so easy as they imagine to endure the unutterable burnings and the everlasting flames of that pit of Hell whose fire knows no extinction and whose worm shall know no death! Oh, hardened Sinner, you now have sorrows which are like the skirmishers before an army, a few light-armed troops to lead the way for whole hosts of God’s avengers, who shall trample you beneath their feet! One or two drops of woe have fallen on the pavement of your life—you laugh at them. Ah, but they are the heralds of a shower of fire and brimstone which God shall rain out of Heaven upon your soul throughout eternity! And yet you may be pitying us poor Christians because of our troubles and sufferings. Pity us, do you? Ah, but our light affliction is but for a moment—and it works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory! Take your pity back and reserve it for yourselves! For your light joy, which is but for a moment, works out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of torment! And your little bliss will be the mother of an everlasting, unutterable torture which we shall happily escape! Your sun will soon set and, at its setting, your night shall come and when your night comes, it will be night forever, without hope of light again! Before your sun sets, my Hearer, may God give you Grace. Do you inquire what you should do to be saved? Again comes the old answer—“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be baptized and you shall be saved.” If you are not a sinner, I have no salvation for you! If you are a Pharisee and know not your sins, I have no Christ to preach to you! I have no Heaven to offer to you, as some have. But if you are a sinner, a bona fide sinner—if you are a real sinner, not a sham one, I have this to tell you—“Jesus Christ came to save sinners, even the chief.”

If you will believe on Him you shall go out of this House of Prayer, absolved! Absolved, without a sin—forgiven, pardoned, washed, without a stain—accepted in the Beloved! As long as you live, that pardon shall avail you. And when you die, you will have nothing to do but to show it at the gates of Paradise to gain admittance. And then, in a nobler and sweeter song, that pardon shall form the basis of your praise while Heaven’s choirs shall sing, or while the praise of the Eternal shall be the chant of the universe. God bless you! Amen.

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #1779 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

GRAPPLING IRONS  
NO. 1779

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, MAY 4, 1884, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Quicken me after Your loving kindness; so shall I keep the testimony of Your mouth.”  
Psalm 119:88.**

When David wrote this part of the Psalm, he was evidently beset by many enemies who sought to destroy him. And it is exceedingly important to note what part of himself he guarded with the most care. Which part of his nature did he regard as the most vital? Where did he hold the shield that he might be screened from the darts of the foe? We observe that his prayer is very little about his body or his temporal interests. Like other men, he desired to be preserved in life and kept in prosperity, but his main prayer is not about these matters. Evidently his chief thought is concerning his soul, his character, his adherence to God’s Word, his steadfastness in the faith.

Observe the current of his supplication—“Quicken me after Your loving kindness; so shall I keep the testimony of your mouth.” He is not so anxious to keep his health, or to keep his house, or to keep his crown, or even to keep his life, as he is that he may keep the testimony of God’s mouth! O Brothers and Sisters, everything is right when the heart is right! And everything is wrong when the soul is wrong. We are prospering even when we lose our wealth if we grow in Grace—but we are in the direst adversity—even if we are growing rich, if we become spiritually poor. Starve your soul and you will be wretched amid the dainties of a king’s table. But let your soul be satisfied as with marrow and fatness—and a dinner of herbs will be better to you than a stalled ox. The first thing, the main thing, the chief thing, is that the heart be kept true towards God and His Word!

Concerning this David prays. I would call to your notice, this morning, first, his intense desire, which is that he may keep the testimony of God’s mouth. Secondly, his consequent prayer arising out of that desire. “Quicken me after Your loving kindness; so shall I keep the testimony of your mouth.” When we have spoken upon those two points we shall then endeavor to use the whole text by way of showing

 his holy example—a lesson to all believing people in all ages to strive after quickened spiritual life that they may keep the testimony of God’s mouth.

I. First, in these words of David, we have HIS INTENSE DESIRE that he might keep the testimony of God’s mouth. This desire was founded in a high esteem of God’s Word. He viewed the Divine Revelation as coming directly from Jehovah’s own mouth. To some men, this holy Book is no more inspired than the plays of Shakespeare or the poems of Milton. We have, in the Old Testament, they say, the sacred writings of the Jews which deserve to be treated with great respect, but that is all. David thought not so and, thank God, we join with David in his opinion! David speaks of God’s Word, though he had but a small portion of it compared with what we have, as “the testimony of God’s mouth.” To me there is no explanation of those Words except that which involves verbal and Infallible Inspiration.

The testimony of God’s mouth must be given in words—God’s heart has thoughts, but God’s mouth has words—and Words from the Omniscient and true God must be Infallible. This view invests Holy Scripture with an awe and a glory which create in us the deepest reverence and brings us to the most earnest attention. When we look upon every Word of this precious Book as coming fresh from God’s mouth, we liken it to those other Words by which He called the universe out of nothing and created light where there had only been darkness. To the ear that is rightly tuned by God’s Spirit there is a voice and a music as of infinite wisdom and love about every syllable of Scripture. The breath of life is in the testimony from the mouth of the living God!

In truth, the Lord may have spoken His Word, actually, by the mouth of Moses, but spiritually His own mouth has uttered it. The Inspired sentence may come down to us from the pen of David, Isaiah, or any other of the Prophets may have been the visible medium of its transmission—but the Word itself has come distinctly and directly, with absolute truth and unmingled purity—from the mouth of the Most High! The coin of Inspiration comes from the mint of Infallibility! The Truth is the teaching of the God of Truth! As such, we render to it our ears, our hearts and our obedient lives. What God has said we dare not question. The man of God wraps his face in his mantle and bows before the Divine Majesty, humbly saying, “Speak, Lord, for Your servant hears.” Those who have this reverence for God’s Word will long to cling to it. They will be afraid of misinterpreting it and they will not venture to add any of their own words to it, lest they be called into judgment for such presumption!

The ears of the devout man seem to hear the thunder of that sentence, “If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.” God grant that we may accept the Bible not as the writings of man, but as the Word of the living God! A few evenings ago we were led to think of those who tremble at God’s Word—may we be numbered among them, for to such will God look and, with such will He dwell. Let us unite with the Psalmist in saying, “Your testimonies are wonderful: therefore does my soul keep them.”

This prayer of David’s, springing from his great reverence for the revealed will of God, includes within it many points of virtue. I cannot explain what he means by keeping the testimony of God’s month by any one line of things—it is a far-reaching prayer, as full as it is brief. He means, no doubt, that he desired to be steadfast in the doctrine which the mouth of the Lord had spoken. He wished to be taught of the Lord so as to know the Truth of God and then to be so confirmed and established in it that no wind of doctrine should carry him away from his moorings. He desired to be steadfast, unmovable, rooted and grounded in the Truth of God—such an attainment is much to be desired at this time.

The things which we have learned and have received, we must hold fast until our Lord shall come. He has set us in our place to keep guard over His Truth—let no sentry sleep at his post! He has put us in trust with the Gospel—God grant we may not be dishonest trustees, trifling with our charge. May those, especially, who are teachers of others, be good stewards of the manifold Grace of God. Though we bring forth things new and old, let us take care that we bring forth nothing but what we find in the treasury of the Word of God. Woe unto the man who declares “a vision of his own heart and not out of the mouth of the Lord.” Too many are doing so at this hour, glorying in their boasted culture and trusting to their own intellects. Of such we may say with Jeremiah, “They are prophets of the deceit of their own heart.” The Lord shall one day silence such and put their followers to confusion.

But blessed is that man who speaks the mind of God and causes the people to hear the Word of the Lord. Man’s word is for the forum, but God’s Word must be spoken in His temple. The things which we have heard, seen and received of the Spirit of God—these things we would hold and teach—and nothing else! I am sure that the prayer of our text means—“Help me, Lord, to know, believe, and hold fast the testimony of Your mouth—may I be a true Believer, having my feet upon the solid rock of Your teaching, and not upon the quicksand of man’s invention. May I never be ashamed of Your Truth. If men call it outworn and effete, may I, nevertheless, know it to be Your own eternal Word which lives and abides forever. Let me feel it to be quickening, reviving, strengthening and as full of power and energy as ever it was. May I believe concerning it that it has the dew of its youth about it, that its locks are bushy and black as a raven, that it still goes forth as the sun from the chambers of the morning and, that like a mighty man, it marches onward conquering and to conquer.”

Brethren, this Word shall never return to God void, but it shall accomplish that which He pleases. This meaning of the prayer is worthy of solemn note in these evil days. But there is another meaning which will seem, to some, more practical, though, indeed, it is not so, for there is as much real practice about right thinking as about right acting! And for the understanding to be obedient to God is as vital a thing as for the actions of the life to be conformed to His will. We ought to be anxious to be obedient to God in all His precepts—and if we are striving to be so, our prayer should daily be that we may be preserved in the keeping of the testimony of God’s mouth.

Our Father who is in Heaven has told His children what His will is— should not this cause them to fulfill it? He has been pleased to teach us what it is that pleases Him—should we not hate that which God hates and love that which He delights in? Let us pray that we may be set in the straight and narrow way which leads unto eternal life—and may be kept there even to the end. There is no Law of God’s mouth which a faithful and loving Believer would wish to be ignorant of. There is no command of His mouth which we would willfully disobey or neglect. Our prayer is, “Make me to run in the way of Your commandments.”

That Law of God which was once so terrible to us, has lost its frowns through the atoning Sacrifice—and now we delight in the Law of God after the inward man and we long to be perfectly conformed to it! Our grief is that we are not perfect. Sin is our pain and plague. We shall never be perfectly happy till we are perfectly holy. Sin is a constant fret and burden to us—whenever we see, even, a trace of it in our nature or our acts, we cry, “Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?” We cannot endure that the shade of evil should flit across the imagination—no, even if in our dreams a sin cast its shadow over our spirit, we wake disturbed. We would not have a wish which leans towards iniquity! We would have every thought brought into captivity to the Lord, bound by the bonds of righteousness and led prisoner along the triumphant way of sanctification, for holiness is life, light and liberty to us. “I will walk at liberty, for I seek Your precepts.” Freedom from the power of evil is the highest liberty which we expect on earth. I am sure, my Friends, the prayer is rising in your hearts at this moment—

*“Teach me to run in Your commands,  
’Tis a delightful road.  
Nor let my head, nor heart, nor hands,  
Offend against my God.”*

David further desired that he might be preserved in perfect and unwavering confidence in the promises of God. The testimony of God’s mouth is largely made up of exceedingly great and precious promises. Oh, what rich and eternal things has He promised to them that fear Him! No good thing will He withhold from them—all things work together for their good. He will give them of the dew of Heaven and of the deep that lies under! The chief things of the ancient mountains and the precious things of the lasting hills has He covenanted to give them! The sad fact is that sometimes His own people begin to question those promises—and if the vision tarries—they are in unbelieving haste and limit the Holy One of Israel! Yet the Covenant is ordered in all things and sure—“God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: has He said and shall He not do it? Or has He spoken and shall He not make it good?”

Not one of His Words shall fail, nor shall one blessing which He has promised be withheld! “All the promises of God in Him are yes, and in Him, Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” His Covenant shall stand fast, though Heaven and earth pass away! He will not alter the thing that has gone out of His mouth. Therefore our prayer is that we may keep the testimony of His mouth and, like our fathers, may be persuaded of the promises and embrace them. What an instructive word is that! “Embraced them”—pressing them to their hearts and holding them dear to their souls! Oh, never,

 never let us dare to suspect the faithfulness of our God! Rather let us emulate the faith of Abraham who staggered not at the promise through unbelief—believing that if God had promised him a seed of Isaac and yet commanded him offer Isaac as a sacrifice— believing, I say, that God was able, even from the dead, to raise Isaac up and so to keep His Word!

All things may be contrary to what they seem to be and all human witnesses may be intentionally or unintentionally false, but the Eternal God must be true! “Let God be true and every man”—yes, and every thing—“a liar.” It were better to suppose the very heavens did lie, that the earth beneath us had become untrue and that all our senses were instruments of deception rather than we should, for a moment, allow that the God of Truth could falter or waver! The largest faith of which the most enlarged mind is capable is the righteous due of God, who cannot err or change! Be this your prayer, that you may be confident of the truth of every promise of the Covenant of Grace and stand to it, come life or come death! Be this your firm resolve—“Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.”

This prayer, then, you see, has a very wide significance, and I want you to observe that upon the very surface of the words there is an indication that this desire in his soul was backed up by the experience of the past. He desires to keep the testimony of God’s mouth—and that implies that he has already received that testimony and is in possession of it! If a man has not obtained a thing, he cannot keep it. Beloved, I would take you back, this morning, for a moment, upon memories of the past. Do you remember the place, the spot of ground where you first heard of God with your inner ear? Do you remember your poverty, your disease, your death? And how the heavenly Word of God gave you wealth, healing, and life in Christ?

Since then, how precious, how soul-sustaining, how full of deliverance, how pregnant with victory have the Words of God been to you in days of affliction and conviction! At this day you must feel that you could not leave this precious Word of God, for you would be leaving the fountain of Living Waters! It has been your life, your joy, your all—why would you leave it? With David you can bear witness, “Unless Your Law had been my delights, I should then have perished in my affliction.” Where will you go if you forsake the Lord’s testimony? What way is open to you if you turn from the way of His statutes? And, my Brothers, the mercies of the past—I might even say the miseries of the past—all bind us to our God and to His statutes. All that has happened up to now has only magnified His Word above all His name!

We have lived on that Word when, otherwise, our soul would have died of famine. We have had light in the midst of more than Egyptian darkness through its testimonies! What wonders we have worked through the promises of God. “O my Soul, you have trodden down strength.” By the power of this Word of God we have run through a troop. By our God we have leaped over a wall. Passing through the fire we have not been burned! Wading through the rivers we have not been drowned, for the Word of the Lord has brought us deliverance! Believe for the future, for the past demands it! God grant that we may, by a childlike confidence, forever keep the testimony of His mouth!

Furthermore, this desire is necessitated by the struggles of the present. Poor David had become like a bottle in the smoke—his eyes were failing, his heart had fainted, his days were growing few, his pathway was intercepted with pits, he was persecuted wrongfully, he was almost consumed—but he adds, “I forsook not Your precepts.” That was the saving clause of it all! We may be in the smoke, but we shall not be smothered! We may be persecuted, but we shall never be forsaken! We may be cast down, but we shall not be destroyed while we keep the testimonies of God’s mouth! We are still in the sea, therefore let us cling to our life belt. We are still in the wilderness, let us daily gather the heavenly manna. Cast not away your confidence which, even now, has great recompense of reward. Stand to it, that, be the present what it may, your choice is made, your understanding is assured, your convictions are indelible!

Change as you will, all you that know not God—we that know Him by long experience are inseparably united to Him! To quit the Truth of God for modern notions would be to leave the streams from Lebanon for the sand of the desert! The sweet waters of Siloam for the brine of the Dead Sea! Tossed no longer with tempest, our soul has found her anchorage and rests in the Lord. “O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise!” We are not forever learning, but we have come to the knowledge of the Truth of God by the teaching of the Holy Spirit. We are neither to be bribed nor bullied so as to lose our faith, for it is of the operation of God! The elect shall not be deceived, for they know the voice of their Lord and He has taught them to distinguish the language of the Truth of God from the jargon of error.

I am sure I may add that this desire of David is well warranted by every prospect of the future. We do not know what troubles we shall yet experience, but we do know that He who has helped us, bears us through and makes us more than conquerors! The testimony of God’s mouth is our shield in the day of battle. We cannot put on Saul’s armor, for we have not proved it, but we have proved the panoply which God provides for us in His Word and, therefore, by His Grace, we wear it daily! That future, which extends in endless vista far beyond our mortal life, demands faithfulness of us. If we are traitors to the Truth of God, today, what will become of the next generation, and the next, and the next? At this hour we suffer for the negligences of our ancestors—error has been established by a long continuance of perversity—shall we persevere in maintaining falsehood?

Today will you rebuild the Jericho which the Reformers threw down? Will you pull down the Jerusalem which they have built up? If so, our sons shall curse the memory of their fathers! This poor world may experience great delay to her grand hope if Christian men in the present are unfaithful to the Truth of God. Ages hang upon the conduct of the Church of today! Speak out the Truth of God while you live, so that when you leave this life it may be said, “He, being dead, yet speaks.” Let us, today, anchor the Church to sound doctrine, lest she drift further and further in years to come. Speak God’s Word faithfully, for that Word shall live and conquer when you are gone. He that sows the seed of heresy and evil doctrine entails upon succeeding generations an evil and a plague— and his very name shall rot! But he that sows the good Seed shall be the father of 10,000 successive harvests!

Today we may seal the coming centuries unto the Lord, setting the impression of the Truth of God upon them. Be you steadfast for the Truth of God in your own day, for you know not what perilous times will come before the advent of the Lord Jesus! Your words and acts, today, will affect eternity itself! A word spoken today, barbed with ill intent, and envenomed with the poison of falsehood, may make souls to smart throughout a dread eternity! Tremble, therefore, lest in any way you cease to keep the testimony of the mouth of God!

Thus much upon David’s desire—may a like desire burn in our hearts! II. Secondly, let us consider HIS CONSEQUENT PRAYER. He did not pray immediately that he might keep the testimony of God’s mouth, but he offered the next prayer to it, the one which leads up to it right surely. As a man that goes up to his chamber does not leap up all at once, but climbs the stairs, so does David rise to the keeping of the Lord’s Word by the prayer—“Quicken me after Your loving kindness.”

This prayer is wisdom. He that says, “I shall keep the testimony of God’s mouth, for I am fully resolved to do it,” had better salt that resolution with prayer, or it will rot like all things which come of the flesh.

“Oh, but” he says, “I am strong-minded and firmly established and shall never be moved from the hope of my high calling.” O Man, you know not yourself, nor the power of temptation, if you are depending upon yourself! You will be as readily blown away as the thistledown upon the plain when the north wind is raging! O Heart, you are but human! And humanity is unstable as water. O Man, you are frail as a shadow— trust not in yourself for a moment! “Trust in the Lord with all yours heart; and lean not unto your own understanding.” Put up a prayer to God that He would confirm you, for in that way and in that way, only, shall you be true to His statutes. He shall keep God’s testimony that is kept by God’s power, and he alone, therefore this prayer is wisdom.

Moreover, as there is but one Lord and Giver of life, what more could David do than pray? He could not give himself life—and he was wise to apply to Him who, alone, quickens the dead. This prayer was suggested, I do not doubt, by David’s inward state. He says, “Quicken me.” Does he mean that he was dead? Yes, comparatively. He means that he felt the power of death working in him. Before he is quite numbed, he cries, “Quicken me.” He was not altogether dead, for dead men never pray for quickening—but he had a sense of deadness creeping over him, gradually chilling the genial current of his soul. He was dull. He was heavy. He felt lethargic and indisposed to activity. “Quicken me, Lord,” he says. “Quicken me.” The Lord has given us some life, Beloved, but that life, at intervals, seems to go to sleep through weariness—let us pray, “Quicken me, Lord.” The Lord has given us His Well-Beloved Son, not only that we might have life, but that we might have it more abundantly.

Is your life vigorous, dear Brother? Yet this prayer is still suitable for you. Still cry, “Quicken me.” Nobody knows how much vitality a man can manifest. He who seems all alive might still have

 more life. He can rise from life to strength, from strength to activity, from activity to intensity, from intensity to violence. When a man is thoroughly alive, what a man he is! Are we not, the most of us, a droning, sleepy, half-quickened set? We mope and grope like men who are looking for their graves! But when the Lord comes to us, He quickens us from head to foot—and then the blood leaps in our veins, our spiritual breath is full and deep—and we are fired with enthusiasm. We are dry, now, and powerless, like the bush in the desert, but the Spirit descends upon us as fire and then we blaze with Divine fervor! We can do all things through Christ that strengthens us!

If we desire to cleave to the Truth of God, let us pray that up to the highest point we may be filled with the life of God, since life and truth go together. Oh that we may become quick in every respect—quickened by Him who is the Resurrection and the Life. This is every way a suitable prayer—a very fitting one for lukewarm Laodiceans. It will not be out of place in the mouth of any of us! However full of life we may be, let us all together plead for this master blessing of quickening—

*“Revive Your work, O Lord!  
Disturb this sleep of death.  
Quicken the smoldering embers now,  
By Your almighty breath.”*

It is a prayer which met David’s condition. Carefully read the octave of verses with, “Caph,” [verses 81-88] at the head of them, and see how well it fits in at the end of each. “My soul faints”—“Quicken me.” “My eyes fail”—“Quicken me.” “I am become like a bottle in the smoke”—“Quicken me.” “How many are the days of Your servant?”—I seem near to death— “Quicken me.” “The proud have dug pits for me”—“Quicken me,” that I may spy out their pitfalls and avoid them. “They persecute me wrongfully”—“Quicken me,” Lord; for they cannot hurt me, though they pour death upon me, if You pour life into me. “They had almost consumed me”—“Quicken me,” and then I may burn with fire, but I shall not be consumed.

You see, the blessing of quickening meets all these conditions. I believe that the best preservative under trial is increased spiritual life. Did I hear you complain, “I am very poor”? Brothers and Sisters, if your soul is quickened and you become rich in faith, poverty will be a light burden! “But I am very depressed in spirit.” Truly, this is sad, but if you are more fully quickened, you will shake it off as living men put from them the garments of the tomb. But you cry, “I have such hard work to do!” If you have stronger life, the task will be easier. “But I have been disappointed and defeated.” You will have few defeats or you will bear them joyfully when your spiritual life is vigorous and full. “Quicken me!” I suggest that this prayer be presented all over the place by every child of God. Breathe it before God in the silence of your hearts. “Quicken me. Quicken me.”

I, Your minister, how much I need the quickening influences of Your Spirit, O God! My Brothers associated with me in the Church, how much they require it! Lord, quicken us all! You that have come up from the country—some of you grow dull enough in your rustic quietude—join with us in pleading, “Quicken me!” You who are Sunday school teachers need life for yourselves if you are to communicate it to others. In any and every case, increased spiritual life will be a blessing to you! Whatever your difficulty, whatever your doubt, whatever your sorrow, whatever your temptation—here is a prayer that meets every case—“Quicken me after Your loving kindness.”

It is especially a prayer which answered to David’s aim in presenting it. He prayed this prayer that he might be enabled to keep God’s testimony. Now who are the people that give up sound doctrine? Why, the people who do not know the quickening power of it in their own souls and do not live in the delightful enjoyment of it! Who are the people that give up holy practice? Why, the people that are not dwelling in the power of the Holy Spirit, and are not full of the life of God! Who are those that are tossed up and down like the locust and are shifty and have no fixed position? Why, they are the men that have not received the fullness of life from on high. You can do a great many things with a dead man—but you cannot make him stand up! You may try most earnestly, but a corpse cannot stand! Until you put life into the body, it will fall to the ground, and so if the Life of God is not in you, you cannot hold to the Truth of God, or maintain purity, or walk in integrity. Life is absolutely essential to steadfastness in the Truth.

Whenever I hear of churches and ministers departing from the faith, I know that piety is at low ebb among them. It is proposed that we should argue with them—it is of no use to argue with dead people! It is proposed that we should bring out another book of Christian evidences—it is small benefit to provide glasses for those who have no eyes! What is needed is more spiritual life, for as the Truth of God quickens men, they love the quickening Word of God. But dead men care little about that which is to them a dead letter. “Your Word has quickened me,” says David, and the man that is quickened clings to the Truth which quickens him. Whenever you feel a little shaky and your feet begin to totter, and your head to swim, just cry, “Lord, quicken me! Here is a sign that I am dying, for I am doubting. Pour more of Your Divine Power into me.” When spiritual life is healthy, it will feed upon the Word, and so take it into its innermost self that nothing can remove it.

Why do men grow weary of heavenly food? David tells us—“Fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. Their soul abhors all manner of meat and they draw near unto the gates of death.” Just so—the best meat in God’s Word is not enjoyed by men who are sinful and foolish, for they are suffering under a soul-sickness which kills holy appetites. The prayer of our text answers David’s aim— “Quicken me after Your loving kindness; so shall I keep the testimony of Your mouth.” He presented this prayer on the right ground. Observe how He pleads the mercy and love of God. “Quicken me after Your loving kindness.” That is a lovely way of putting it—“I do not, now, appeal to Your righteousness, but to Your love, Your special love, Your loving kindness—to those that are of kin to You! Lord, I would entreat You to bless me because of Your loving kindness to those whom You did foreknow and did predestinate to be Your own! Oh, by that special love of Yours I pray You quicken me, that I may take fast hold upon Your Word and never let it go!”

He means, too, I think, by saying, “after Your loving kindness,” that he desires to be quickened by a sense of God’s love. Is there anything that puts life into a man like that? A mother finds her babe half frozen and she warms it back to life by pressing it to her bosom—she imparts the warmth of her own heart to it until it lives, again, and smiles. It is just so with our God—there is no reviving us except by pressing us close to His bosom! Did I hear you say, “I will repent in terror. I will go to Moses to get revival”? I advise you not to do so, for he will use the rod most severely and flog you back to feeling! And that is by no means a desirable method. Divine Love is a sweeter and surer quickener. The true elixir of

life is  
love

. Oh, for a draught of it!—  
*“Your mercy is more than a match for my heart, Which wonders to feel its own deadness depart. Awakened by Your goodness I rise from the ground, And sing to the praise of the mercy I’ve found.”*

“Quicken me after Your loving kindness.”

I would close this section of my discourse by saying, it is a prayer which has a promise attached to it. It was not so in David’s day, but in these latter times we have a promise which fits it as the wax the seal. When I have a lock I am always glad to find a key which fits it. Here is the lock—“Lord, I feel as if I were dead.” And here is the key—“He that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.” That answers the supplication as a glove fits the hand—“Though he were dead, yet shall he live.” If it were possible for a Believer to get between the jaws of death and stand there, the mouth of the sepulcher could not close itself upon him! Look at Jonah. He is in the whale’s belly and the whale is in the great deeps, far down from the light of day. Surely it was the very belly of Hades to Jonah, but it could not be his grave! The great fish had an indigestible morsel within him at that time—he could not possibly consume the Prophet because Jonah believed the Truth of God with a living faith.

He soon escaped after he had uttered his creed—and this was his creed—“Salvation is of the Lord.” With that confession of faith in your heart, no power can destroy you, no belly of Hell can swallow you up! You must live, for so it is written, “Though he were dead, yet shall he live.” Plead that promise and cry unto God, when you feel sloth creeping over you—“Quicken me, that I may keep the testimony of Your mouth.”

III. We part with David and this is the last word—in this verse we have HIS HOLY EXAMPLE, which I commend to you.  
First, offer this prayer of life when you feel that you are dead. It is a strange paradox, but I put it with all my might to you. If this morning you are forced to cry, “My heart seems like adamant! My feeling is all gone—if anything is felt it is only pain to find I cannot feel! I seem to be altogether out of sorts—if the life of God is in me at all it is like a spark hidden away among the ashes—and I cannot discover it!” Well, then, bestir yourselves to pray. “Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light.” Let your groan go up from the grave’s mouth. If you can get no further than a sigh, let your moans be addressed to God, let the heaving of your anguished heart move towards your heavenly Father. Let prayer arise like smoke from the alter towards Heaven—“Quicken me! Quicken me!”

Such a prayer will prove an antidote to the poison of death. Though your bones lie scattered at the grave’s mouth, as when one chops wood, yet if the sighing of your soul is towards quickening, you shall be brought up again! “Your dead men shall live.” From between the very ribs of death there shall come a higher, better and more Divine life. Breathe, then, your desire in prayer after this fashion—“Lord, Your poor, dead servant cries to You for life!” Do not say to me, “It is such an odd prayer. It is so strange and, therefore it cannot be correct.” I gather that it is genuine because it is so strange that no one would borrow it from his neighbor! In spiritual life that which is according to routine is often false—and that which is so strange that only a personal experience could have suggested it, is most probably correct. Therefore I say, again, to you who seem as if you were dead, let this prayer go up, “Lord, quicken me!” And He will enlighten you by His Holy Spirit.  
The next thing I learn is this, that the living Truth of God can only be held firmly by living men. Some who are very sound are nothing else but sound—but we need no such allies! Some of those who hold a correct creed are very narrow and will not tolerate a departure by a hair’sbreadth from their fixed opinions—but narrowness is not strength! To know the Truth of God and feel its power—and manifest its influence in your life—is the proof that you have grappled it to your soul as with hooks of steel! A dead creed in a dead man’s hand is like dead wheat in the grip of an Egyptian mummy—what can come of it?  
But observe carefully a living man, with living seed to sow, and you shall yet see a harvest! A living man who grasps a living Truth of God is mighty as Moses with Aaron’s rod in his hand which had life in it, for it budded and blossomed and brought forth almonds! Such a rod as this can divide the Red Sea and fetch waters out of flinty rocks! Oh, for living Truth in the grip of a living man! My dear Friend, if you are going to be a champion of reformation, first be reformed yourself! If you would become a defender of the faith, first be an exemplifier of it! Let Jesus reign in your soul and then He will make you a priest and king unto Himself by His own Divine Power!  
The next lesson is, regard God’s loving kindness as a source of life. Unhappily too many have viewed it as an excuse for death. “Oh, yes,” they say, “I am one of God’s chosen. I need not trouble myself about holiness or activity. I shall be saved by Sovereign Grace.” Do you sit down and quietly cross your legs, fold your arms, do nothing and then look to be rewarded for it? In all probability you will be lost at the last, for you are already lost! The man who dares to pervert the Truth of God is already a lost man! But he that knows the loving kindness of the Lord says, “Quicken me, Lord. Such love as this I must translate into life— grant that, to me, to live may be love.” Those words, “love,” and, “live,” are very near akin in their conformation. They are joined together in spiritual things—let no man put them asunder.  
Do not get behind the door and suck your honeycomb and say, “I love enjoyment, but I hate employment! I never try to defend the Truth or to spread it, but it is very sweet to me.” Ah, my dear Sir, that kind of honey will poison you! The thought of it makes me sick! The right thing is to feel that the more God loves you, the more you love Him—the more He does for you, the more you will do for Him—  
*“Loved of my God, for Him again  
With love intense I burn.  
Chosen of Him ere time began,  
I choose Him in return.”*

“Quicken me after Your loving kindness.”

And lastly, let Divine aid, whenever we seek it or obtain it, lead us to the practical use of it in obedience. “Quicken me” and, “so shall I keep.” I put those words together in that fashion, for they are together. That is to say, if the Lord gives quickening, I will give steadfastness. The Believer is active, not passive! He is acted on, but he also acts. In the first work of regeneration we are passive—that must be a pure act of God’s Grace. But as the child, as soon as it is born, becomes active and begins to cry, so does a new-born soul prove its activity by its prayer! As the child ever after has an activity all its own in proportion to the measure of its vitality, so will it be with the child of God—he becomes more and more energetic in proportion as God pours into him more and more of the Divine Life.

Come, you that lie in the dust, shake yourselves from it! You that are at ease in Zion, bestir yourselves in the service of your Lord and Master before a heavy woe overwhelms you! This is an evil day—a day in which multitudes are perishing in poverty and sin by reason of their ignorance of Christ—will you not instruct them? This is a day of blasphemy and rebuke in which the Truth of God is cast down and trodden like mud in the streets—will you not stand up for it? If you come not, today, to the help of the Lord and His Truth, then shall you be cursed like the inhabitants of Meroz of old!

But oh, I charge you, men of God who live by faith on the Son of God, feed upon Him and be strong! And then quit yourselves like men and keep His testimonies in the teeth of an infidel world and a philosophizing church! Hold to the fundamentals of the faith though, with others, the foundations are shaken. Abide like rocks in the midst of foaming billows and defy all opposition! Stand fast in the house of your God, below, and this shall be your reward above—“Him that overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of My God and he shall go no more out.” May the best of blessings rest upon you. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 119:81-101.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—  
100 (PART II); 119 (PART III); 459.

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MY SOLACE IN MY AFFLICTION  
NO. 1656

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

**“Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in Heaven. Your faithfulness is unto all generations: You have established the earth and it abides. They continue this day according to Your ordinances: for all are Your servants. Unless Your Law had been my delights, I should then have perished in my affliction.”  
Psalm 119:89-92.**

EVEN in those Psalms which are not associated with any particular chapter of history, we can often trace out the trail of the writer’s experience and track his soul through its wanderings. His reflections become vivid with intense reality. The meditation now before us is evidently prompted by some event deeply carved on the writer’s memory. “Unless Your Law had been my delights, I should then have perished in my affliction.” We know nothing of the time or circumstance when the heart was terrified, when the nerves were shaken, when the weakness of nature asserted itself—the veil is wisely drawn over the sharp pains or sullen griefs that bowed the sufferer down and we are simply solaced with a song celebrating his deliverance out of all his troubles and fears. Possibly his affliction was long, but certainly it reached a crisis so perilous that his life then trembled in the balance! He was then ripe for destruction, ready to have perished.

Moreover, it is noteworthy that whatever his trial may have been, whether it was a sickness or a disaster, or any other manner of adversity, he refers to it as his own—he calls it, “my affliction.” It would ill become us, therefore, to pry into the cause or fashion of his grief, or to ask any further questions. Quite likely I may be addressing some dear child of God who is vexed with an affliction so personal and so peculiar that he feels it to be “his own,” and would deem it an intrusion for another to interfere. Let us not intrude, for we should only increase the grief by our enquiries.

“My affliction” is an expression that bears a marked emphasis and has a tone entirely its own. I do not know whether I am more struck with its pathos or its reticence. At the sound of such words, a stranger might well be touched with pity, but a friend, however sympathizing, would shrink from prying into the secrets of a heart that so delicately conceals its own bitterness. The one and only thing that the Psalmist was eager to tell us was the prescription that soothed his pains and sustained his spirits. On mature reflection, he is confident that he would have perished under that affliction if it had not been for certain comfortable and delightful reflections concerning God’s Word. You and I may, at any time, be exposed to the same mental or spiritual depression, through one or other of those manifold sorrows which enter so largely into Christian life. There are plenty of miry places on the way to Heaven and so it will be our wisdom to diligently enquire how this good man passed through them.

I like to hear how any godly man has been comforted, for it comforts me. I take a deep interest in the simple tale of any humble prisoner whose bonds the Lord has loosed. And I feel it a choice pleasure to chime in with songs of thanksgiving which come from the lips of grateful suppliants whose cries the Lord has heard. Observe that the Psalmist appeals to certain facts which he remembered. “Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in Heaven. Your faithfulness is unto all generations: You have established the earth, and it abides,” etc. And then he refers to certain delights which he experienced in reviewing these facts –“Unless Your Law had been my delights, I should have perished in my affliction.”

I. Here, then, we have strong consolation IN CERTAIN FACTS WHICH HE REMEMBERED. Fly to the mountains when the enemy invades the land. Hide in the strongholds of your God!

1. Our first comfort is the eternal existence of God which is implied in the continuance of His faithfulness and power. “The Lord lives” is the plea of souls harassed and haunted by foes without and fears within. Observe, I pray you, that there is nothing casual or accidental in the tone of the Psalmist’s meditation, as if some stray thought had darted a ray of light into the mind of one who was dreary and downcast. His joy is not like a flower that blooms in the desert, or a bird that chirps merrily amidst the frost of winter—he has abundant and even overflowing causes for joy! His confidence runs on the grand old classic lines which Inspiration has hallowed. When Moses was appalled by the frailty of man, he uttered his majestic ode to the eternity of God. “Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.”

So here, the eternal existence of God is the first fact to which the afflicted saint clings. According to the most eminent scholars, the opening sentence should be read—“Forever You are, O Lord; Your Word is settled in Heaven.” The second verse, as you may notice, is divided into two sentences, and the poetic parallelism requires a like arrangement in this verse, if the poetic rule is carried out. But this would not form two stanzas unless we read the first four words as a distinct sentence—“Forever, O Lord, You are.” Whether this revision is warranted or not does not matter, for, as I have already said, the fact is implied in the wording of the authorized version. God is. He is forever the same and His years are throughout all generations. This is a very simple Truth of God—who but a madman or a fool ever doubted it?

If there is a God, He must be self-existent and eternal. But it is from simple things that sweetest consequences flow. Bread is simple enough—you do not require some eminent chief of the kitchen to teach you the art of making bread. But see what multitudes of people are fed upon that simple article of food! And so the simplest Truth of God is the most precious, for it sustains many more than that daintier form of Truth which may be only suitable for men of strong minds or of great experience in the things of God. In the song of Moses—that song which is linked with the song of the Lamb—we have an apostrophe that language could hardly surpass. “Who is like unto You, O Lord, among the gods (or mighty ones)? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?”

To what lofty heights of expression did the holy Prophets often rise in proclaiming the grandeur of the Lord’s being, the magnitude of His works, the sovereignty of His will and the faithfulness of His promises to His people! And yet the wealth of imagery that Isaiah or Ezekiel could call up, or the melting tones that Jeremiah could utter, can but faintly display the excellence of Him that fills all in all! They rehearse His praise to whom, alone, all worship is due, in words that swell and sound forth like the music of the spheres. They assail the heathen idolatry which offered its incense to engraved images, or they expose the heartless treachery that withheld homage from the true God. They denounce the unbelief which limited the Holy One of Israel by distrusting His words. In any of these cases, if we lend them our ears, they succeed in elevating our hearts from the groveling thoughts of our fleeting life to the infinite perfection of Jehovah’s essential Deity, of whom (to accommodate the idea of His everlasting existence to our tiny computations) we are told “that one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”

My Brothers and Sisters, we are compassed about with God on every side. In Him we live, move and have our being. His self-existent might is our neverfailing mercy. Observe, I pray you, that this simple Truth of God is the most sublime fact which the mind of a rational creature can aspire to lay hold of. God lives—lives as God! Get a grip of this vital reality and it will send a glow of health through every faculty of yours soul! “Believe in the Lord, your God; so shall you be established: believe His Prophets; so shall you prosper.” And unless God is in all your thoughts you cannot be a godly man! Nothing happens to the Lord by chance. What can threaten His existence, thwart His purpose, weaken His power, dim the clearness of His eyes, diminish the tenderness of His heart, or distract the wisdom of His judgment? “You are the same, and of Your years there is no end.”

Then remember, child of God, you are a sheep that can never lose its Shepherd. You are a child that can never lose its Father. “I will not leave you orphans,” said Jesus, and therein He did but reveal the Eternal Father’s heart. In direst straits we still have a Father in Heaven! When a widow, who had long been inconsolable, sat moaning for the loss of her husband, her little child plucked her by her gown, and said, “Mother, is God dead?” That question served to rebuke the mother’s fretfulness and to remind her that she was not without a Guardian and Friend. “Your Maker is your Husband; the Lord of Hosts is His name.” It opened up to her a well of refreshment, which, like Hagar in the wilderness, she had not before been able to see. Listen, child of God—you can lose your goods, but you cannot lose your God! Like Jonah, you can see your gourd withered; but your God remains! You may lose your land, but not your Lord; your savings, but not your Savior! Even if it came to the worst and you were left, awhile, as one forsaken of God, Himself, yet still you would not lose Him, for, like the Lord Jesus on the Cross, you would still call Him, “My God, my God.”

“The Lord is my portion,” says my soul—a portion that never can be alienated—upon which there is the entail of an irreversible decree that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us, might have strong consolation. He lives! He reigns! This God is our God and He shall be our Guide even unto death. Yes, it is a simple fact that God is, but it is a fact that may often recur to us with singular freshness.

I met an eminent servant of God one day in the street, a man whose name, were I to mention it, you would all honor. He was in a rather gloomy and desponding mood that morning and in the course of our conversation he told me that he believed the powers of evil in this country would get the upper hand and that Christianity would be almost stamped out, he feared, partly by Romanism and partly by infidelity. And that in all probability I should live to see the streets of London run with blood while anarchy would riot as it did in the first French Revolution. He went on at such a rate that I felt bound to remonstrate with him. So I told him that I was not easily scared by such evil prognostications, for I was persuaded that God was not dead. This is our firm rock of hope—the reins of government are in the hands of the living God—and the devil cannot frustrate His decrees, nor can events baffle His will!

When Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together against the Holy Child Jesus whom the Lord had anointed, how little could they effect! They had it all their own way, or, at least, they thought they had. How much did they really accomplish with their willful counsels and their wicked hands? Hear it distinctly. They (these emissaries of Satan) did whatever God’s hand and God’s counsel determined before to be done! And thus it will always be! The adversaries of the Lord are exceedingly fierce, but you and I who believe in God can afford to smile at their folly. If it must be so, let the powers of darkness have all the vantage ground they seek—and they will reap all the greater defeat. “He that sits in the heavens shall laugh. The Lord shall have them in derision. Yet have I set My king upon My holy hill of Zion.”

The Church, they tell us, is in danger. That depends upon whose church it is! But if it is the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ, the gates of Hell shall not prevail against her. Let us, in this, then, be joyous and confident! If Luther could sing when the battle had but just begun—while yet the demon of the seven hills had temporal sway—why should you and I be hanging our harps on the willows, now that the fight has made the dragon bleed? Come, let us sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and his rider He has thrown into the sea. And as for these Amalekites, that meet us on the road and would arrest our progress, let us, like Jehoshaphat, appoint singers unto the Lord to go before our army and meet them with hallelujahs! Let us sing—Arise, O God, and make Your enemies flee before You like chaff before the wind! Yes, let them be as the fat of rams burnt upon the altar, for You, Lord, are King, and You shall reign forever and ever! This is a flowing well of comfort.

2. Closely allied to the fact of God’s eternal Being is this other fact of the immutability of His Word. “Your Word is settled in Heaven.” The truth of the proposition will occur to you as simple and obvious. “Thus says the Lord, the Heaven is My Throne, and the earth is My footstool.” His Word is settled in Heaven and issued from Heaven, the seat of His government, and it cannot be altered on earth, this distant colony of His empire! We refer to God’s Word, therefore, in grievous difficulties with great confidence, because we know that every statement it contains is reliable. God’s Word can never change. It is established.

Some persons have no settled residence. They are always moving to and fro, restless, finding no anchorage. But God’s Word is not fixed on earth where things are always on the move—it is settled in Heaven among the infinities and eternities that change not. “Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in Heaven.” The design and purpose of God are fixed, not fickle. He knows what He intends. You and I often begin with a design from which we are bound to deviate as we see something that would be better, or as we see that our better thing is not attainable and we are obliged to be content with something inferior. But in God’s case there can be no defect of judgment which would require amendment and there can be no defect of power which would drive Him from His first determination. God has a plan, depend upon it! It were an insult to the supreme intellect if we supposed that He worked at random, without plan or method.

To some of us it is a Truth which we never doubt, that God has one boundless purpose which embraces all things—both things which He permits and things which He ordains. Without, for a moment, denying the freedom of the human will, we still believe that the supreme wisdom foresees, also, the curious twisting of the human will and overrules all for His own ends. God knows and numbers all the inclinations and devices of men—and His plan, in its mighty sweep, takes them all into account! From that plan He never swerves. What He has resolved to do He will do. The settled purpose of His heart shall stand forever sure. Of what use could the opposition of angels or of men be when Omnipotence asserts its supremacy? As you walk down your garden on an autumn morning, the spiders have spun their webs across the path, but you scarcely know it, for as you move along, the threads vanish before you.

So is it with every scheme, however skillfully contrived, that would arrest the fulfillment of the Divine purpose! The will of God must be done! Without the semblance of effort, He molds all events into His chosen form. In the sphere of mind as well as in that of matter, His dominion is absolute! One man cannot immediately operate on the will of another man so as to change its course, although intermediately he may propound reasons which, by their effect on the understanding, may completely alter the inclination of His fellow creature. But this is a true Proverb—“The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: He turns it wherever He wills.”

God can bend the thoughts of men as easily as we can lay on the pipes and turn the water into any cistern we choose. His purpose is settled forever in Heaven! So, too, are His Covenant and His Plan. Brothers and Sisters, I could imagine God changing His mode of procedure, but I could not imagine His changing His Covenant! He has entered into Covenant with Christ on our behalf—the Sacrifice that makes it valid has been slain—and now the Covenant is ordered in all things and sure! Every jot and tittle of it is signed and sealed and ratified by the death and the Resurrection of our glorious Surety and blessed Representative! From that Covenant God will never turn aside. The Covenant of Works we broke, but God kept it, for He did what He said He would do.

The Covenant of Grace we cannot break, for it is made with Another, on our behalf, who has already fulfilled it, so that the Covenant of Grace stands, now, towards the saints without an, “if,” or, “but,” or “perhaps,” and consists simply in unconditional promises of, “I will,” and, “you shall.” Read that Covenant for yourselves and see. Whether you choose to take the copy of it in Ezekiel, or the copy of it presented by the Apostle in the Epistle to the Hebrews, there it stands—a Covenant without conditions, enduring forever, never to be changed! Oh, how I rejoice in the sure mercies of David! “This is as the waters of Noah unto Me,” says the Lord, “for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I will not be angry with you, or rebuke you.” Now, blessed be His name, the Covenant is settled in Heaven!

Then there is another matter which is settled, namely, God’s promise and the power to carry it out. I spoke of the promise being settled because it is virtually a constituent element of the Covenant, but now I mean that Gospel promise which has been proclaimed to the sons of men. “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved”—that shall stand good throughout all generations. “He that believes in Him has everlasting life”—that shall always be true. “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out”—that shall never alter till the day of doom. God will not reverse the things that have gone forth out of His lips! It was proclaimed by Christ, Himself! It was testified by His Apostles. It was ratified by the descent of the Holy Spirit! The promises of the Gospel are settled in Heaven and, therefore, the preaching of the Gospel is full of power among the sons of men.

Go and preach it, dear Brothers! Go and tell it, dear Sisters! Never be afraid that you will make a mistake if you proclaim free Grace and dying love! God has not spoken in secret in a dark place of the earth. The salvation of souls shall be the evidence of the efficacy of the Gospel till every blood-bought one is brought by its power to Jesus’ feet. There is no change in the charge that is committed to our keeping—“Your Word is settled in Heaven.” Moreover, the doctrine of the Gospel as well as the promise of the Gospel is settled in Heaven. I do not know where I shall drift if I once leave the old channel to wind about among sandbanks. Certain of my Brothers delight to sail down a river which has neither buoys nor fixed lights, but plenty of ever-shifting sands! They do not steer according to any chart, but according to their own heaving of the lead, from time to time, and very heavy lead it is to heave!

They say that they are thinking out their doctrines! I would be greatly sorry to have to think out the road to Heaven without the guiding star of Heaven’s Grace or the map of the Word of God! Not Gospel preachers but Gospel makers these men aspire to be. And their message comes forth, not as the Gospel of the Grace of God, but as the gospel of the imagination of men—a gospel concocted in their own kitchen—not taught them by the Holy Spirit! It is the reverse of being “settled in Heaven.” It is not even settled in the mind of its inventor! I pity the hearers, as well as the preachers, of a precarious gospel! That which I preached to you in the beginning of my ministry, I shall preach to you, by God’s Grace, till this tongue shall be silent in the grave! I know the doctrines better, but I know no better doctrines!

There are certain things indelibly impressed on my mind, of a surety fixed, definite, true and beyond doubt. As to ideas that are dubious, concerning which we need to be diffident—I leave my Brothers to discuss them. Sentiments fluctuate so constantly in this 19th Century that I suppose we shall soon require to have barometers to show us the variations of doctrine as well as the prospects of the weather! We shall have to consult quarterly reviews to see what style of religious thought is predominant—and then we shall have to accommodate our sermons to the dictum of the last wise man who has chosen to make a special fool of himself! As for myself, I shall continue to be unfashionable and abide where I am. “Stick in the mud,” says somebody. “Standing on the Rock,” say I! No, if you will—grown to the Immovable Rock—not to be turned aside.

If this Gospel is a lie, I grieve that I ever preached it and I will never preach it again. If it is true, truth is not a thing of almanacs and quarterlies. If true in the year, “two,” it is as true in the year, “1882.” And if it is not true today, it never was and never will be true, for the Truth of God does not come and go and be and cease to be. Fall you back, O simple hearts, upon this blessed fact—God’s Word is “settled in Heaven.” It cannot be settled at Oxford, or settled at Cambridge, or at any other university! But it is settled in Heaven. Go to Heaven’s Book and read Heaven’s Word under the teaching of Heaven’s own Spirit. And you shall go from strength to strength in the knowledge—not of what may be true, but of what is true, having the Revelation of God to confirm it—an authority from which there can be no appeal!

3. The third thing is the faithfulness of the fulfillment of that Word of God. “Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled in Heaven. Your faithfulness is unto all generations.” Those men who have trusted God’s Word in any generation have always found it true. In Apostolic times, or further back than that, in David’s age, in the era of Moses, in the time of Abraham, in the days of Noah, in the life of Abel—whoever has trusted in God—has found that He has heard prayer, that He has been the Rewarder of all them that diligently seek Him!

The Covenant, as I have already said, does not change, and the Truth of God does not change, and though the generations greatly differ in the judgment of men, I greatly question whether God thinks them different. One generation is as like another as successive waves of the sea. We think we grow much wiser, but it is not a very strong proof that we are wiser because we think we are! I very much question all this fiddle-faddle about the progress of the 19th Century. True, we rush over the country by steam instead of traveling by broad-wheeled wagons, and we get smashed up all the more readily! We now go all round the world to buy a bit of bread—we used to grow it in our own fields—and it was just as good, then, as it is now that it comes from afar.

There were good people then. There are good people now. I will not decry whatever progress has been made in machinery and the arts and so on. I thank God for it all, but about the improvement in ourselves—that is the point! I imagine that we bear a striking resemblance to our fathers. When I read the story of the children of Israel in the wilderness, I think I see their sins and their follies, their murmurs and complaints repeated in our own lives. But whether or not the race has changed, there has been no change in God’s dealings with the race. Whenever a Believer has rested in Him, He has fulfilled His Word to that Believer to the letter. This has always been the rule of the Kingdom of God—“According to your faith, so is it unto you.”

Were I to enlarge upon all the vicissitudes through which God’s servants have passed, we should have to come to the one conclusion, “Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivers him out of them all.” That is so today as it was thousands of years ago. O Beloved, this is the mercy—that God is still faithful! When I used to hear my grandfather tell of the faithfulness of God to him, my young heart was encouraged to trust in God. When I have heard my father tell of the faithfulness of God to

 him, I have been strengthened in my confidence in my father’s God. But I can tell the same tales, myself and, perhaps, I can record more instances than they of God’s goodness to those that put their trust in Him. It will be the same with our children and with our children’s children.

O tried Brothers and Sisters, the Lord will be faithful to you as He has been to me! The Lord will not fail you. Therefore be not discouraged. As your days, so shall your strength be. Underneath you are the everlasting arms. You shall conquer, however hot the fight may become. Only stay yourself upon the Lord and wait patiently for Him. Fret not yourself, in anything, to do evil, for you shall be delivered and God shall be glorified in you.

4. But I must pass on to the next fact worth considering, and that is the perpetuity of the Word of God in Nature. To this the Psalmist alludes in the following words—“You have established the earth and it abides. They continue this day according to Your ordinances, for all are Your servants.” By the Word of God were the heavens made and it is by His Word that all things consist. We talk of the force of gravitation and the laws of Nature, but in very deed the one force in Nature is that God spoke. The Word of the Lord is the power by which all things hold together and remain in their places.

Look at the earth. We talk of the pillars of it—the columns upon which it leans—but what does it rest upon? Our modern science does not weaken the point of the text, it rather strengthens it. The earth rests upon nothing! There it is, floating in space, and yet it has never drifted from its place or turned aside from its proper orbit! There are little quivers within its own bosom, but it does not rush away from the place where God ordained it to be. It continues its course around the sun with immutable fidelity. This world is rather larger than you are and requires more power to keep it in its place than is requisite to keep you in your place. Yet there it is! Shall not the Lord hold up His servant and keep him from wandering? All the machinery in the world could not turn the globe on its axis or move it in its orbit. I suppose that no angelic force would be adequate to bring about such results as God accomplishes simply by His will. He establishes the world and it abides.

Let us be confident, then. Whenever God means to break His Word and change His ordinances, we may expect to find this earth go steaming into the sun, or else it will rush far off into space, nobody knows where. But while it keeps its place, what have you and I to worry about? Is it not the sign that the Lord will keep us, also? Has He kept the stars, which are the major? Shall He not much more keep us, who are the minor? What are we but small specks, grains of dust things scarcely to be seen? And yet we talk about the great power of God that we shall need to keep us in our place! Let us cease from doubt as we see this huge world kept like a sapphire in its golden setting by the Divine hands. Nor, Brothers and Sisters, is it this world alone, vast though it may seem to us, yet a little planet amidst the larger spheres! The Lord upholds all worlds comprehended in one vast system. “They continue this day according to Your ordinances.”

Every star maintains its place. “One sun by day, by night ten thousand shine,” yet these constellations and all other creations of God’s hands observe, each one, the ordinance of Heaven! God does not swerve from His own statutes, nor does He suffer the shining hosts to break their ranks. They may not rush about in wild confusion. They are the sentinels of Heaven. He calls them all by name, as He musters and marshals their serried ranks. Are they not all His servants, waiting at His feet as maidens attend their mistress? They all do His bidding! Ought not this cheer our hearts and inspire us with courage? If the heavenly bodies—as we are known to call those inanimate creatures of the Most High—are upheld by His power and disposed of by His wisdom, why should we discredit the Omnipotence which preserves our souls, or the Omniscience which orders our steps? If yon arch stands without buttress, cannot my faith rest on the promise, though no means of support are visible?

Those mighty orbs to which we have been referring are under God’s Law and subject to the Divine statutes—alike in respect to the motions they perform and to time influence they produce. All the creatures obey their Maker except man! There is no rebellion, to our knowledge, anywhere in the universe except among fallen angels and fickle mortals like ourselves. What, then, am I troubled about? Opposing forces cannot injure me. If God wills, He can send a squadron of angels to help me. He can bid the stars in their courses fight for me if it is necessary. All are His servants. The perpetuity of the Laws of Nature is a proof of the continuance of the Word of God. Strengthen your confidence as to things not seen by the steadfastness of the things that are—

*“His very Word of Grace is strong  
As that which built the skies!  
The voice that rolls the stars along  
Speaks all the promises.”*

5. There is one other fact which I will only touch upon—the perpetuity of the Word of God in experience. “Unless,” said the Psalmist, “Your Law had been my delights, I should then have perished in my affliction.” We know, by experience, what he means. The trouble is a thing of the past, but the trembling is still present to our memory. We were mercifully delivered when we might have been utterly destroyed! My Brothers and Sisters, that same Word of God which has made the earth keep its place, has, up to now, been sufficient to make you keep your place. Some of you have passed through deep waters and yet you have not been drowned. I have a sympathy with young people, when they are doubting, because they have not seen the mighty works of which their fathers have told them. But if you have been sustained for 40 years in the wilderness, you ought to know the faithfulness of God—and I am ashamed of you when you get disheartened and discourage your Brethren.

Most of all, I am ashamed of myself whenever I fall into despondency. Admiral Drake had been round the world. He had survived all sorts of storms and battles. One day, when coming up the Thames, he was caught in such an ugly wind that he was likely to be wrecked, and the admiral cried, “No, no, I have been round the world, and I do not intend to be drowned in a ditch.” I want you to be animated by the same courage, for the Lord will not leave you! Surely He who has preserved you in all your previous distresses will not desert you in your present adversities! If you had not taken delight in God’s Word, you would long ago have perished in your affliction! Look back upon the past, then, and see that God has been sufficient for you up till now. What reason have you for the suspicion that He will not befriend you even to the end?

II. Having thus drawn your attention to the facts that the Psalmist recounts, I pass on, in the second place, to speak of THE DELIGHTS WHICH HE EXPERIENCED IN THE TIME OF HIS TROUBLE. “Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward,” said one of Job’s comforters, though I fear Job got little enough of comfort out of that sage reflection. Those troubles, however, that are common to men, are often the occasion of uncommon anguish to persons of sensitive nature. Some men and women receive a shock from which they never recover. They gradually droop and languish, health and happiness, alike, failing them. It is in such seasons of acute distress, when this world has no palliative to offer, that God’s Word can minister infinite delights to soothe the distractions and heal the sorrows of the heart. These Psalms—most of them written by David, and the rest written by disciples of the David school— compass almost every conceivable form of adversity to which our poor suffering humanity is exposed.

And there is another thing which I am sure you will find it sweet to muse upon. It is this—in all cases the sigh was turned into a song before it was admitted into the sacred calendar. This is a Law of the Kingdom of Heaven over which I linger with unspeakable delight! In fact, I can take a survey of your troubles, as well as of my own, with much composure when I perceive that they are all capable of being turned into joy! Our sympathies are continually stirred by the bereavements one and another of us are called to suffer. The ties of kindred and friendship are being broken all around. Each day has its obituary. This goes on from generation to generation. But the sharp pang of losing those we love is in no wise lightened by the fact that it is so general.

Some of us today live in dread. Others have drawn down the blinds. He is gone on whom you leaned for succor. She has been snatched from your side, of whom you could say that none upon earth excelled her. Your nurslings, the flowers that bloomed around your hearth, have faded. I hear your desolate moan, but there is music not far off! All creatures are shadows, yet there is substance. At length you turn to these Scriptures and as you read, “The Lord lives; and blessed be my Rock; and exalted be the God of the rock of my salvation,” your soul revives! You quit the treacherous sea and reach the solid rock when you repeat the words, “Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.” Alas, dear mourner, your thoughts have wandered, like the dove from out the ark, over the watery waste. But now, again, Noah’s hand encloses you. There you have calm and peaceful rest. Here is the pillow on which your aching head can lie at ease—“You are the same; of Your years there is no end.” Such delights can sustain a sinking soul.

David was oftentimes in such a condition that everything seemed shifting and inconstant. Nothing about him was fixed. Those whom he had most trusted seemed to be his worst enemies. His fortunes changed. He was driven from the home of his father and from the palace of the king to wander in the wilderness and lodge in caves of the earth. And he became distrustful, at times, of his own destiny, for his heart was heavy, even though, once, he had been the happiest of the sons of men! Oh then, this was his delight—he fell back upon the eternal settlements! “Your Word is settled,” said he. “I have no settlement. I have to go off to Gath to try and find a shelter, but every place seems to cast me out. The men of Keilah will deliver me up. I am hunted and harried by Saul. Nothing is settled for me, but O, my God, Your Word is settled.” Now peace comes like a river to his spirit. His delights are in the Word of God and his heart is full of holy glee.

So, too, sometimes he felt that his own faith failed him—and that is a desperate failure. When your vision is obscured and you walk in darkness, you are sorely molested by doubts and haunted with fears. You can believe nothing. You can hardly grip at anything that others believe in—this is terrible! Your own frailty, your own unfaithfulness to God, your own waywardness, your own fickleness disquiet you with feverish dreams and waste every particle of your strength. Then what a grand comfort it is to stand upon the Divine faithfulness— “Your faithfulness, O God, is unto all generations. You have not changed.” Oh, try, dear troubled ones, and may God the Holy Spirit help you in the trying, to get a hold of this delightful Truth of God! And while you mourn your own unfaithfulness, rejoice in the faithfulness of God and the immutability of His Covenant.

David’s Bible was of much smaller compass than ours, but there was one passage in it which I dare say he often read and deeply pondered. It was that which tells us how, when Abraham was lonely and desponding, “The Lord brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward Heaven and count the stars, if you are able to number them.” How often have those ordinances of Heaven sent beams of light into the heart of the spiritual mariner while he has been heaving to and fro on the troubled sea of life! So did David look right up to the deep of Heaven and rest in God, the Stable and Abiding!

Last of all, when none were his servants and all helpers failed him—when he was alone and none would do him homage, he found comfort in this thought—that all are God’s servants, that all the powers of Nature wait upon the princes of the blood royal and do homage to the children of the King of kings! You are not poor! Your Father is rich! You are not deserted! God is with you! You are not without helpers! The angels are bid to keep watch about you! Oh, that I could touch the mourner’s downcast eyes and let him see the mountain full of horses of fire and chariots of fire round about Elisha! Oh, that I could touch the heart of some of God’s desponding servants and make them see how God is working for them, even now, and how surely they shall be helped!

Perhaps you remember the story of a conversation between the burgomaster in Hamburg and holy Mr. Oncken when he first began to preach. The burgomaster said to him, “Do you see that little finger, Sir? While I can move that little finger, I will put the Baptists down.” Mr. Oncken said, “With all respect to your little finger, Mr. Burgomaster, I would ask you another question. Do you see that great arm?” “No, I do not see it.” “Just so,” said Mr. Oncken, “but I do, and while that great arm moves, you cannot put us down! And if it comes to a conflict between your little finger and that great arm, I know how it will end.”

It was my great joy to see the burgomaster sitting in the Baptist Chapel, at Hamburg, among the audience that listened to my sermon at the opening of the new Chapel. The little finger had willingly given up its opposition and the great arm was made bare among us. Trust in the Lord forever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength! God bring us all to that, both saint and sinner, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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LOVING THE LAW OF THE LORD  
NO. 3090

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 1908.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, MAY 10, 1874.

**“O how I love Your Law! It is my meditation all the day. You, through Your commandments, have made me wiser than my enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for Your**

**testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients because I keep Your precepts.”  
Psalm 119:97-100.**

DAVID had a very small Bible, but he thought it a very precious one. Our Bible is quite a large library compared with the one that David had, yet he read and re-read it and exulted greatly in the treasure which he found in it. I have sometimes heard people say that they wished they had fuller records of the life of Christ. And when they find John writing that he supposed that even the world itself could not have contained all the books which might have been written about the Savior, they ask, “Why have we not more of the interesting incidents of His career preserved?” Some of these very people do not read what is preserved and they seem to forget that the Bible is exactly the right size—most portable and most useful and that if we had a larger one, some people might then have said—“It is too large a Book for us ever to read it through and to have it at our fingertips.” Let us be thankful that the Bible is so large that there is abundance of fresh reading for every day of the year, and let us prize it as David prized his much smaller portion.

David was one of those who helped to enlarge the Bible. The Spirit of God rested upon him in so large a degree that he has given us, in the Book of Psalms, a most precious part of Sacred Writ. Yet he did not despise the rest of the written Word that he possessed and it is notable that those saints who had most of the Spirit of God were always those who most highly valued the Scriptures. When Peter, filled with the Spirit, stood up with the eleven, on the day of Pentecost, his sermon consisted mainly of quotations from the Old Testament. The Holy Spirit even quotes from writings which He Inspired in order to show the value which all of us should attach to the written Word. Certain persons have said that they did not need what was written, for they had the Spirit within them to teach them all they needed to know. But such talk as that is not according to the Spirit of Christ. Neither is it according to the mind of the Inspired Psalmist, for although God spoke by him, yet he greatly valued that which God had spoken by others and he searched the Scriptures which he possessed with much avidity and intense delight. Beloved, if the man who was Inspired by the Spirit of God thought so much of the Word of the Lord, how highly ought we to value it, we who will never be inspired writers, and who cannot stand on the same platform with David in that respect! Our conscience ought to commend to us the Infallible Truth which God has presented for our use in the Sacred Scriptures.

Being desirous to press upon you, Beloved, a sense of the value of Holy Scripture, I want you to learn from our text, first, David’s love for the Word. Secondly, how he showed it. And, thirdly, what benefit came to him from it.

I. First, then, let us consider DAVID’S LOVE FOR THE WORD. He has tried to express the inexpressible by saying, “O how I love Your Law!” He cannot tell the Lord how much he loves it. He had good reason for loving God’s Law—his love was a reasonable one. Love is sometimes blind, but in this case, David loved with his eyes open and loved with good reason. We ought to love all that God gives to us, and especially all His blessed teaching. If you do not love the Bible, you certainly do not love the God who gave it to us—but if you do love God, I am certain that no other book in all the world will be comparable, in your mind, to God’s own Book. Where God’s handwriting is most plainly to be seen, there God’s servants will at once turn their eyes. When God speaks, it is the delight of our ears to hear what He says.

Further, David loved the Law of the Lord, because being God’s Word, it was solid Truth. In other books, there is some truth and some error. Apart from the Bible, the best book that was ever written in this world has mistakes in it. It is not possible for fallible men to write Infallible books. Somehow or other, we either say more than is true or less than is true. The most skillful writer does not always keep along that hairline of truth which is more difficult to tread than a razor’s edge. But Scripture never errs. Here is the gold bullion without a single particle of alloy. Here is the Living Water leaping from the Rock and there is no defilement in it. David truly wrote, “The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.” Such is the Truth of God as we find it in Scripture. Now, a man of truth naturally loves the Book of Truth, and finding it to be so pure he cries, “O how I love Your Law!”

In addition to this being God’s Book and being, therefore pure, David no doubt loved it, because of the majestic goodness, the sublime Grace of its Revelation. What has the Bible taught us? Some terrible things, certainly, for it has revealed the wrath to come. But glorious things, too, for it has revealed the great Substitute who took our sins upon Himself and put that wrath away for all who trust Him. How wondrous is the Revelation of God in Christ Jesus! Well might the Prophets long for it and kings desire to see it. You have it in this blessed Book of God. You have far more of the Revelation than David had, for though he could see Christ in the types of the Old Testament, you can see Him much more clearly in the Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament. How much, then, you ought to love that Word which so plainly shows you the way of salvation through the atoning Sacrifice of God’s only-begotten and well-beloved Son! Clasp the Bible to your bosom, repentant, pardoned Sinner, and say to the Lord, “O how I love Your Law, for through this Word my chains have been broken and I have been set free forever!”

David also had good cause to love that Law of the Lord because it had been his comfort so often in the time of his sorrow. And many of us can say the same. How often have I, in times of frightful depression of spirit, reached down my Bible and within a few minutes have been able to leap for joy of soul and sing in the conscious realization of the comforting Presence of my God! Get but the one text suitable to the occasion, applied to the heart with power by the Holy Spirit, and it will not matter where you are—you will be sure to be glad. You might lie in a dungeon, as Paul and Silas did, scarred with the scourge, but you would sing as they did and make your fellow prisoners hear you. If you could but get the right text applied to your soul by the Holy Spirit, it would be precious to your soul in your times of deepest distress and would be like a star lighting up your darkest night!

I might thus go on for a long while, showing you that David had good reason to love the Law of the Lord, but you probably believe that as much as I do, so I will content myself by reminding you that he loved it all. He says, “O how I love Your Law!” He means not only some of it, but all of it. Dear Friend, if there is any text of Scripture that has a quarrel with you, you had better submit to it at once! If you are not in full agreement with the Word of God, you are wrong and it is not! There are some passages of Scripture which certain Brothers and Sisters do not care to read, as they do not suit the views that they hold. There are some commentaries that seem to have been written on the principle of twisting the text into the shape that the commentator approved. And I am afraid we have all had a share in attempts to make the Word of God say what we think it ought to have said according to our system of divinity. That will not do, Brothers and Sisters! We must give up trying to mend the Scripture and say to the Lord, “O how I love Your Law! I love it too well to wish to alter a single letter of it.”

One Brother does not like the Doctrine of Election. Another likes the Doctrine of Divine Sovereignty, but he does not like the Doctrine of Human Responsibility and he cannot endure exhortations to sinners to repent and believe the Gospel. Well, Brothers, it does not matter what you like, or what you do not like! If the Doctrines are in the Word of God, you had better make up your mind to like them, for they will not be taken away to please you! You cannot bend the Bible to your mind—how much better it would be for you to bend your mind to the Bible and to say, “O how I love Your Law—the Doctrines of it, the precepts of it, the promises of it, the ordinances it enjoins upon me, the warnings it sets before me, the exhortations it gives me!” Love the whole Bible from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation and be prepared even to die rather than to give up half a verse of it!

Further, David loved it always. I find that we might read his declaration in the past tense and yet give the sense of the original—“O how I have loved your Law!” He is a saint who loves God’s Word always. We have heard of some who read their Bibles on Sunday, but put them away in a drawer with a sprig of lavender all the week. That was not David’s plan—he could say, “O how I love Your Law! It is my meditation all the day.” And no doubt he meant every day of the week. We must love God’s Word when we are at business and act upon it there. And love it in our families and act upon it there. To love the Bible in the study as a book to start into is a good thing, but it is not a good thing if it ends there—we must love the Word so as to live upon it wherever we may be. In any company, if it is right for you to be there, you will feel, “I am not afraid to take God’s Word with me here, for I am now doing what is in accordance with it.” I have heard that “the Golden Rule” once went to a place where men were gathered together to make money—I think it was the Stock Exchange—and they called the manager and locked it up, for they said, “‘Do unto others as you would that they should do unto you,’ is a rule that will never do here.” But the Christian does not find it so— he can transact his business and keep his Bible near his heart all the time. When the Bible and the ledger fall out, it is a bad business. Oh, that we might love God’s Book all the day and make it the guide of our ordinary business transactions!

David not only loved God’s Law always, but he was not ashamed to say that he loved it—“O how I love Your Law!” Young man, were you not afraid, the other night, to confess that you were a Christian when your companions began chaffing you about your religion? I hear that they read a paper that was very critical and sarcastic and that one of them turned round to you and said, “I think you are one of that sort.” And you blushed a good deal at the accusation. Well, blush now to think that you blushed then, for there was nothing to blush about! Ashamed of being a Christian? Be ashamed of ever having been ashamed! David said, “O how I love Your Law!” He cared not who heard him and if our hearts are right with God, we shall not be ashamed to stand up, even if we are alone, and confess Christ! Minorities have generally been in the right, and the multitude usually runs to do evil. Vox populi is not often vox Dei—it is more frequently the voice of the devil than the voice of God! That man is worthy of being called a man who dares to do right whatever others may do or say. “O how I love Your Law!” said David, to let all men know that he was in love with the Law of the Lord to the best conceivable extent!

II. But now, secondly, HOW DID HE SHOW HIS LOVE? He says, “It is my meditation all the day.”  
Perhaps some thoughtless person says, “I suppose that David had nothing to do but sit down and read his Bible.” He had to be fighting Philistines and ruling a kingdom! And with so much to do that his hands were kept fully occupied, someone asks, “How, then, did he meditate all the day?” Well, those who are the most busy are often the very men who do the most meditation, for idleness and meditation are not generally very close companions. An idle man usually has idle thoughts, but the busy man, when he is able to think, thinks busy thoughts that are worth thinking. Now, if we love God’s Word as David did, we shall mediate upon it all the day as he did. How are we to do that?  
It is an admirable plan to fix your thoughts upon some text of Scripture before you leave your bedroom in the morning—it will sweeten your meditation all the day. Always look God in the face before you see the face of anyone else. Lock up your heart in the morning and hand the key to God and keep the world out of your heart. Take a text and lay it on your tongue like a wafer made with honey and let it melt in your mouth all day. If you do this, and meditate upon it, you will be surprised to notice how the various events of life will help to open up that text. If that particular text does not seem suitable to some special occasion, steal away into a quiet place and get another one—only let your soul be so full of the Word of God that at all the intervals and spaces when you can think upon it, the Word of God dwelling in you richly may come welling up into your mind and make your meditation to be sweet and profitable!  
I am afraid there are not many Christian who meditate upon the Word nowadays. Meditation seems to have gone out of fashion. But if you do not meditate upon what you read, you might as well read some ordinary book for all the good your reading will do you. It is no use to hurry through your reading of the Scriptures like a man riding through a field of ripe corn—it is no use trying to reap a good harvest in that fashion. To get the goodness out of the Scriptures, you must meditate upon them and so digest them, just as you have seen the cattle lie down to chew the cud after eating. To get the nourishment out of a text, turn it over and over in your mind, ruminate upon it, pull it to pieces word by word. It is a good thing, sometimes, not to be able to read fast, so that, like Mrs. Beecher Stowe’s Uncle Tom, one has to spell a text out letter by letter—L e t, let—n o t, not—y o u r, your—h e a r t, heart—let not your heart—b e, be—t r o u b l e d troubled. That is the way to suck the sweetness out of the text! A text of Scripture is often like an apple tree with abundance of ripe fruit on it and we are underneath the tree. Give it a shake, Brothers and Sisters—shake it till the ripe fruit drops down!  
David proved his love to the Law of the Lord by meditating upon it. Perhaps you think that would be very dull work, but I am sure it was not, nor will you think it so if I tell you what it was upon which he meditated. The Word of God was a letter from his Father—and if ever your father has been away in a far country, you know how you have prized a letter from him! Good wife, if your husband has gone for a long sea voyage and he has written home to you, how many times you have read his letter! Did I not see it, the other day, almost worn to pieces because you have carried it in your pocket ever since you received it? Nobody else knows how precious it is to you because nobody else is as nearly related to the writer as you are.  
The Bible also contains the portrait of our truest and best Friend. I have seen you look at a photograph, the likeness of your dear mother who is in Heaven, or of a dear child, or of someone still dearer, for you like to look at that face. And one reason why we love to read the Bible and meditate upon it, is that it contains such a lifelike portrait of Christ. The Bible is also the charter of the Christian’s liberty. He was once a slave, but he is now free through the blessed Emancipator who is revealed in this Book. The Bible is the title-deed to our heavenly inheritance. The Bible is our patent of nobility, for here we read that we are made kings and priests unto God! The Bible is our chart by which we steer safely across the watery wastes of life. The Bible is our checkbook. We come to it and take out the promises upon the Bank of Heaven—we fill them up and present them before God in prayer—and we have what we will of Him when we ask in the name of Jesus! The Bible is to us the telescope through which we look forward to the celestial city where we are journeying!  
I might keep on thus, by the hour together, singing the praises of this blessed Book, but I have, surely, given you reasons enough for our making it the theme of our meditation all the day. I wonder how many of us do this? If I were to say, “Hands up, everyone who has a Bible,” everybody’s hands here would go up. I suppose that nobody here is without a Bible. But if I were to ask, “How many here, constantly, as a habit and a delight, meditate upon the Scriptures?”—I wonder what answers I would receive? Well, I will not ask you that question, but let everybody ask it of himself and judge himself concerning it in the sight of God.

III. Thirdly, we have to enquire, WHAT BENEFIT CAME TO DAVID THROUGH LOVING THE LAW OF THE LORD? He was such a Bible reader and Bible lover that he gained some benefit from it—what was that benefit? He tells us that he grew wiser than three different sorts of people. First, he was made wiser than his enemies. Secondly, he had more understanding than all his teachers. And, thirdly, he understood more than the ancients. These are three of the blessings which meditation upon the Bible will give to us!  
First, we shall be wiser than our enemies. God had taught David the meaning of the Scriptures and, by his daily meditation upon them, he had become wiser than his enemies. Some of you young Christians have to live from day to day among those who would like to pick holes in your coat if they could. They are watching you to try to bring an accusation against you—and they are very subtle and crafty—how shall you be able to guard yourselves against them? This is the best way. Get the Bible worked into your soul and act according to its teachings—and then your enemies will not be able to bring a true accusation against you! Or if they do, they will be like the men who watched Daniel who could find nothing to bring against him except his religion. If you want to baffle all those who would bring a charge against you, do not trouble about them in the least. Care only to walk according to God’s Word, for so you will defeat them!  
In addition to trying to bring accusations against you, they will also seek to lay traps for you. Many a young man has had a hard time of it through the traps that have been laid for him. All sorts of schemes and plots have been devised to try to draw him aside from the right path. But the craftiest man in the world will not be able to overthrow the man who simply follows the directions given to him in the Word of God! Keep to that course and you will win in the long run. Although I do not like our common proverb, “Honesty is the best policy,” yet there is a measure of truth in it—that even as a matter of policy, to do right is the best plan. I have often seen very cunning men quite puzzled by a simple-minded, straightforward, honest Christian.  
David says that he was able to defeat all his enemies because God’s Word was always with him and he followed the directions that he found there. And, dear Friends, whether you are young or old, if you love the Law of the Lord, put your trust in Jesus and then obey the teachings of your Divine Master, you will certainly be able to defeat all the subtlety and all the malice of Hell! You may, like Joseph, be put in prison without being guilty of the crime laid to your charge, but it will be the straightest way to a Throne! You may be persecuted for righteousness sake, but if it came to the very worst and you were to be a martyr for the Truth of God, that would be the straightest way to Heaven! Therefore be just and fear not. Obey your God. Let the dogs of Hell howl at you as they may—you shall be more than conqueror at the last!  
Next, David had more understanding than all his teachers. He went into the schools as well as into the camp and after his mental battles with the leaders there, he says, “I have more understanding than all my teachers: for Your testimonies are my meditation.” I do not think he means that he had more understanding than the wise, good, pious teachers, but that he had more understanding than those who vainly set up to be leaders. There are still some of that kind left to plague us—the dry-as-dust teachers who would gladly teach us the letters of the Word, but ignore its true spirit. If there were any teachers in David’s days like the Jewish Rabbis who have left us the Talmud, the Mishna and the Gemara, he might well say that he knew more than they did! They knew so much that they muddled everything. They went down so deep that they stirred up the mud at the bottom and then neither they nor anybody else could see! David meditated upon the Law of the Lord and, therefore, he knew a great deal more than those learned Rabbis knew.  
But surely I may use the text with reference to skeptical learned men. Every now and then there is a great eruption—a volcano bursts up just under the foundations of the temple of the Truth of God as if it were going to blow it all up—and the lava of skepticism begins running down our streets as if everything were about to be destroyed! At one time, it is a bishop who has been figuring on a slate and found out that Genesis is wrong. At another time we are told to give up some other portion of Scripture as being incorrect. Well, what do we say to all this? Why, that we have more understanding than all these skeptical teachers if we meditate in God’s statutes! We may not know how to answer all their questions, but we know how to ask them questions which they cannot answer! We may not be able to confute them in argument, but we shall still believe the Law of the Lord! Many a poor Christian has been baffled by some clever infidel, but he has said to himself, “If that gentleman had tried to prove that I do not exist, I daresay he could have proved it in the same fashion as he has proved this point, which I could not answer, but I know what I do know—and I do know that Christ is a precious Savior. And as I have read of Him in His Word, so have I found it in my own experience. The Word of the Lord and my experience tally, so I am satisfied.” If you come straight from searching the Scriptures, you need not mind who attacks you—the Scriptures will be like a coat of mail to repel all the darts of those who assail you—and you shall be able to stand up against those who are far more learned than you are. It is well if you can cope with all the arguments of the skeptic and meet him and master him on his own ground—but the most of believing men and women are not able to do so. If you cannot argue thus, be content if you are like Cowper’s poor woman who knows no more than that the Bible is true, for you may, like David, still be more than a match for the skeptic and understand more than all your teachers because you meditate upon God’s statutes.  
Last of all, David says that he had more understanding than the ancients because he kept God’s precepts. Oh, those ancients—they have a great deal to answer for! Some people seem to think that if anything is ancient, it must be right. If you look (I hope you will not care to do so) into some of our parish churches, you must say that no human being could see any difference between them and the Roman Catholic places. If you do go in, ask the Ritualistic “priest” why he wears all that finery, why he burns stuff that has such a nasty smell—and what he means by all the mummeries and incantations that are such a mystery to you. He says, “This is what the ancient Church did.” It he could quote the really ancient Church of the New Testament, you might agree with him—but he refers you to St. Honorius, St. Veronica, or some other ancients, either real or legendary. Does this “priest” succeed in getting people to believe in his ancient nonsense? Yes, he gets his conversation among those silly women and sillier men who read novels, but never read their Bibles! But they never do and never will pervert a true Bible reader and Bible lover! If they ever do get hold of a nominal Baptist, they make a great boast of it because we are so accustomed to go to the Bible for everything we teach, and to test everything by the Bible! I have known a Romanist say, “I can’t make any headway with you. You don’t believe in any traditions, not even in infant baptism! You will have a Bible proof for everything, or else you will not accept it.” Yes, and if all professing Christians would but keep to that principle, Romanism and Ritualism would make far less headway than they do! We say, with Isaiah, “To the Law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them.” Give us a Bible-reading, Bible-loving people, and all the “priests” in the world, with all their finery, will never make any headway! An open Bible is death to their follies and lies if there are but people with open eyes to read it! The worst of it is that although we have the open Bible, we have not as many Bible readers and Bible lovers as we wish to see. May the Lord graciously increase the number the whole world over!  
There is another kind of ancients that we have to guard against—very old sinners. There are old sinners who will say to you young men and young women who have lately been converted, “Ah, we have seen a good many people just as earnest as you are now, but you will soon grow as cold as they did.” Some of them will shake their heads and say, “We know you religious people, you are all a set of hypocrites.” A wicked old sinner will tell you that when you are as old as he is, you won’t be led astray in this way, yet he is himself going to Hell as fast as he can! He says, “Don’t you, young man, imagine that you know everything. I have had more experience than you have had and I know a thing or two that is worth knowing.” I used to have an old man of that kind in my congregation at Waterbeach—a man pretty near 70 years of age whose whole life had been one of wickedness and sin. He came to the place where I preached on purpose to pick up young men to lead them astray if he could. He was nothing better than a walking beer-barrel and his mouth poured out little but filth. I had some sharp brushes with him and I could not help feeling a holy indignation against him whenever I saw him. There are some such old sinners still about. Beware of them! Their hoary hairs are no crown of glory to them, but a crown of shame! A hoary head, where there is no Divine Grace, is worse than a fool’s cap—and there is no fool in the world like an old fool, and no other fool that can equal a gray-headed sinner who has for 70 years rejected Christ and, in spite of a thousand warnings and invitations, has deliberately made his own damnation sure! Take no notice of him, I pray you. If it is an old woman who has lived in the ways of sin and tries to allure you to evil, O young man, flee from her—young woman, escape from her at all costs! There are none whom Satan uses so much as he does these ancients, because they can balk so glibly and look so sweetly at you and all the while they are deceiving you and trying to ruin your immortal soul! If you cling to the Bible, they can do nothing with you. When there is a great parade of age and authority, yet the advice given is backed up by experience that is vicious, turn at once to your Bibles and say to the old man, or to the old woman, respectfully, yet firmly, “That is what you say, but

 this is what God says”—and then turn to your God and say with David, “I understand more than the ancients because I keep Your precepts.”  
To sum up all, the heart must be right with God and it can only be so as the result of simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And when the heart is right and you are saved, I beseech you to let your Bibles be everything to you. Carry this matchless treasure with you continually. And read it, and read it, and read it again and again! Turn to its pages by day and by night. Let its narratives mingle with your dreams! Let its precepts color your lives! Let its promises cheer your darkness, let its Divine illumination make glad your life! As you love God, love this Book which is the Book of God and the God of books, as it has rightly been called. And may God make this Book to be your comfort when you pass through the valley of death-shade. And may you in Heaven have forever to praise Him who revealed Himself to you through the pages of this blessed Book! Amen and amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 119:113-128.**

Verse 113. I hate vain thoughts: but I love Your Law. Presumptuous thoughts, erroneous thoughts, wicked thoughts, foolish thoughts—all three David hated. A good man ought to be a good hater as well as a good lover. What should he hate? He should hate vain thoughts. What should he love? He should love the Law of the Lord. If we do not hate sin in the very egg, we shall not be likely to hate it in its fuller development. The very thought of sin must be detestable to us and if we do not think of evil, we shall not speak evil, nor do evil. We ought to begin with David at the beginning, and say, “I hate vain thoughts.” Yet negative religion is not sufficient, so we should go on to the positive form—“‘I love Your Law’ and I love it so much that I wish I could always keep it, never transgress it and never forget it.”

114. You are my hiding place and my shield: I hope in Your Word. “You are my protection against every kind of danger.” David had been accustomed to hide in the caves of the mountains, but now he says that he hid himself in his God. When he did not hide, but stood out bravely against the ranks of his foes, then God was his shield to cover him in the day of battle.

115. Depart from me, you evil-doers: for I will keep the commandments of my God. If, by your evil example, you would keep me from serving my God, I will make you keep yourselves from me so that I may neither see nor follow your ill example—“Depart from me, you evil-doers: for I will keep the commandments of my God.” David puts his foot down firmly and says, “I will keep the commandments of my God.” It is a grand thing to be able to speak of “my God.” Another man’s God would be of little use to me, but when He is my own God, my God in Covenant relationship, then I may well say, “I will keep the commandments of my God.”

116. Uphold me according unto Your Word, that I may live. “Lord, I cannot even live unless You uphold me according to Your promises.” The Christian is so dependent upon God that he owes his life and the continuance of it to upholding Grace.

116. And let me not be ashamed of my hope. “If Your promises could fail me, then I would have cause to be ashamed of my hope. Therefore, O Lord, let me never at any time have the shadow of a doubt concerning the truthfulness of Your promises, lest I should begin to be ashamed of my hope!”

117-118. Hold me up, and I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto Your statutes continually. You have trodden down all them that err from Your statutes: for their deceit is falsehood. “They are like salt that has lost its savor, which is neither fit for the land nor yet for the dunghill, but men cast it out and tread it under their feet. And this is what You do with ungodly men, especially with those ‘that err from Your statutes.’ Then tread them beneath Your feet, ‘for their deceit is falsehood.’ They try to make it look like truth, but it is falsehood all the while.” How much of deceit there is in this world which men gloss and varnish so that the thing looks right enough though all the while it is deception and a sham! May God keep us from all the trickeries and falsehoods and errors of the age!

119. You put away all the wicked of the earth like dross. “As the dross is thrown away when the useful metal has been extracted from it, so, O Lord, when You have taken all Your saints out of the world You will put the wicked of the earth away like dross.”

119. Therefore I love Your testimonies. What? Does David love God’s testimonies because they are thus severe? Yes, for it is the mark of a true Believer that he does not kick against the severities of his God. Worldlings can rejoice in the god of this age who is said to be nothing but effeminate benevolence, but the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob is the God of Justice who will by no means spare iniquity! And for that very reason a true Believer says with David, “I love Your testimonies.”

120. My flesh trembles for fear of You; and I am afraid of Your judgments. This is the man who truly loves God and this is the kind of fear that perfect love does not cast out. Though we love God supremely, we become for that very reason God-fearing men, and dread to do anything that would cause Him anger or sorrow.

121. I have done judgment and justice: leave me not to my oppressors. When a man is conscious of doing right, he has a good ground of appeal to God. If, when it was in your power, you did not oppress others, you may plead with God that He will not let others oppress you. If it has been your habit to act with judgment and justice towards others, you may expect that God will defend you against all your oppressors.

122, 123 . Be surety for Your servant for good: let not the proud oppress me. My eyes fail for Your salvation. “I have looked for it so long, I have longed for it so eagerly that my eyes seem to grow inflamed with watching—a film seems to come over them so that I cannot see out of them—‘My eyes fail for Your salvation.’”

123. And for the Word of Your righteousness. “I look for no salvation except in the way revealed in Your Word. And I do not wish You to do an unrighteous thing even to save me from my oppressors.”

124. Deal with Your servant according to Your mercy. He dares not ask to be dealt with by God on any other ground than that of mercy. Though he is innocent of that which the ungodly laid to his charge, he is not innocent before God and, therefore, he pleads for mercy. He acknowledges that God is his Lord and Master and that he is God’s servant. And as a man should deal mercifully with his servant, he pleads that God will so deal with him—“Deal with Your servant according unto Your mercy.”

124. And teach me Your statutes. He had kept God’s statutes so far as the eyes of men could see but, before God, he takes a humbler position and begs to be taught what he is to do. He asks to be instructed, like a child, in the statutes of his God.

125. I am Your servant. This is the third time in four verses that David mentions this relationship. He seems proud of being God’s servant. Though he were but as a menial, yet would he glory in it—“I am Your servant.”

125. Give me understanding, that I may know Your testimonies. “Lord, do not merely teach me, but give me understanding.” That is what our teachers cannot do. They may put the truth before us so plainly that we ought to understand it, but they cannot give us understanding.

126. It is time for You, LORD, to work: for they have made void Your Law. And surely this is an age in which this prayer is very suitable. On all hands we see God’s Law ridiculed, or denied, or travestied, or else hidden under tradition or under the dicta of so-called scientific men, or in some way or other “made void.” Oh, that God’s right hand of Grace might be stretched out to do some miracle of mercy in the land at this very time!

127. Therefore I love Your commandments above gold; yes, above pure gold. “Therefore”—because the wicked tasted God’s Law and made it void—David loved it all the more! It is a live fish that swims against the stream, it is a live man of God who can say, “They have made void Your Law, therefore I love Your commandments above gold; yes, above fine gold.”

128. Therefore I esteem all Your precepts concerning all things to be right. “Ungodly men think they are wrong. That is an additional proof to me that they are right.” When a certain old philosopher had been praised by a bad man, he asked, “What have I done amiss that he should speak well of me?” And there are some men’s mouths out of which the praise of Christ or the praise of the Scriptures would be to God’s dishonor. They tell me that So-and-So spoke blasphemously against Christ, but why should he not do so? It is natural for him to be a blasphemer. When serpents hiss, do they not act according to their nature? I do not read that Christ stopped men’s mouths when they blasphemed Him, but I do know that when the demons bore witness to Him, He silenced them, for He liked not to be praised by diabolical mouths! Let ungodly men say what they may—we know the value of their speeches and we are not troubled by them.

128. And I hate every false way. Again David mentions his hatred of all falseness. Some men are such “chips in the porridge” that they neither love nor hate, but the Believer is a man or woman who has both loves and aversions. He loves the truth and, therefore, he hates every false way.

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THE SOJOURN IN MESECH  
NO. 2780

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, MAY 25, 1902.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK, ON A LORD’S-DAY EVENING, DURING THE SPRING OF 1860.

**“Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!” Psalm 120:5.**

MESECH was the son of Japheth, from whom, according to history, were descended the men who inhabited that most barbarous of all regions, according to the opinion of the ancients, the northern parts of Muscovy or Moscow and Russia. The inhabitants of the tents of Kedar were the descendants of one of the sons of Abraham who had taken to nomadic habits and were continually wandering about over the deserts. They were thought to have and doubtless were, guilty of plundering travelers and were by no means the most respectable of mankind. We are to understand, then, by this verse, that the people among whom the Psalmist dwelt were, in his esteem, among the most barbarous, the most fierce and the most graceless of men. And, therefore, it is that he cries, “Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!” He felt a woe in his heart because of that evil companionship in which he was compelled to abide.

This has been the cry of the children of God in all ages. Lot had his ears vexed with the filthy conversation of the men of Sodom. Many of the woes of Micah sprang from those men who were sharper than a thorn hedge—every one of them ready to tear and scratch his neighbor. David’s deepest griefs came from the men who surrounded him—on the one hand, the unfriendly sons of Zeruiah, who were too strong for him and, on the other hand, Shimei and the sons of Belial, who made a reproach of every word he uttered and every deed he did. Even Isaiah, himself, that happy-spirited Prophet, one day cried, “Woe is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips!” And then he added another cause of his woe, “and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.” And I expect I may truly say that, to this day, you, my Brothers and Sisters, who are followers of Jesus, have often had to cry out, “Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!” And you have longed to be far away from this dusky world, so full of sin, traps, pitfalls and everything that makes us stumble in our path—and of nothing that can help us onward towards Heaven.

I propose, on this occasion, first, to say a word or two in justification of the Psalmist’s complaint. Secondly, to justify God’s dealings with us in having subjected us to this dwelling in the tents of Mesech. And thirdly, a few words, by way of comfort, to those who are sad at heart by reason of those ill times and those ill places in which they abide.

I. First, then, Brothers and Sisters, A WORD OR TWO IN JUSTIFICATION OF THE PSALMIST’S COMPLAINT. I will not say that it is thoroughly commendable, in a Christian, to long to be away from the place where God’s Providence has put him. But I will say, and must say, that it is not only excusable, but scarcely needs an apology, for that Christian to sometimes cry out, “My soul is weary. I am almost weary of my life because of the wicked men that surround me on every hand.”

Think, my Brothers and Sisters, of what Christians have to suffer from the wicked world, and you will not wonder, you will not feel, I am sure, that they should excuse themselves when they cry, “Woe is me,” for think how the wicked world slanders the Christian. There is no falsehood too base for men to utter against the followers of Jesus! There was a shameful slander that was circulated among the heathen, that the early Christians, when they came together, met for the most obscene and even cruel rites—whereas those holy men and women only gathered together to eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of Him whom they loved. And, to this day, the chosen weapon of Satan with which the Evil One does great mischief, and on which he relies as his masterpiece of hellish ammunition against the Church, is slander! And this often wounds the Christian and cuts him to the quick when he finds his good name suddenly blasted and when filth is thrown upon his snow-white garments. It is but little marvel when he has sought studiously to avoid the very appearance of evil—when he has picked his steps, knowing the world is a miry place— when he has sought in everything to avoid giving offense to any man, and yet he sees himself abused on every hand! It is but little marvel, I say, that he should cry, “Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech!”

But if slander were all, though this might suffice to justify the complaint, yet would there be something lacking. For, alas, the Christian, dwelling as he does among wicked men, finds his good things are continually marred, so that he has to cry, “When I would do good, evil is present with me—not only here in my own heart, but in my own house and round about my neighborhood!” I know that some of you live in crowded places where you can scarcely pray without being overheard and laughed at and, if you have a meeting for prayer and friends join you in singing the songs of Zion, a crowd soon gathers round your little window and the mockers make all manner of discordant sounds. If you would learn a lascivious song, you have but to throw up your window and listen to what is being sung in the street—but if you would have thoughts of Heaven and sing of God, how hard it is when you have those about you who will cast these things in your teeth, suggest all manner of ribaldry and turn your best words into a reproach against you!

The Christian is like an chained eagle. How often does he fret over that chain and bite it! He sees the stars up yonder and he knows that he is brother to the lightning and he wants to be aloft there in his own native element—how he frets and fumes at his captivity! His mighty spirit struggles within his body and he longs to stretch his wings and fly straight to yonder lofty heights! And when he sees those about him feeding upon the husks that swine eat, or when they hurl their carrion at him, how often does he long to be free—to break down the bars of his cage and get away to his own companionship—to some associates that are fit for him, some spirits that are congenial with his spirit! How he pants to be with his own group—the cherubim and seraphim, the holy ones that day without night keep ceaseless watch and sing in unending harmony around the Throne of Jehovah who lives and abides forever! Were he a worldling, he would be satisfied with the world, but since he is of nobler blood, these things here below all tend to check the aspirations and the longings of his Heaven-born spirit. It is, indeed, no strange thing that he should cry, “Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!

But, besides this, the Christian is conscious that evil companionship is damaging to him. If he is not burnt, he is at least blackened by contact with the ungodly. This world is to him a place where if he does not accumulate actual filth, it is hard to travel an hour along its roads without being covered with its dust. Though, by the Grace of God, he is kept upright, yet he feels, when he goes upon his knees again, he has suffered from contact with poor, fallen humanity. He goes up into his chamber for communion with Christ and his spirit seems to drink the dew of Heaven fresh from the Throne of God! But he has to go down into the world and the hot sun of business shines upon him—and then comes the dust of this world to mar him and he goes back to his chamber and feels like Samson when his hair was shorn away. He begins to cry, “My soul lies cleaving to the dust!” Sometimes he longs to get away from his fellows. He would, if he could, keep himself abstracted and alone that he might cultivate continual friendship with Christ and abide near to the bleeding side of Jesus. That is a foolish wish, as I shall have to show, by-and-by, but yet it is no wonder that he cries aloud, when he finds his spirit so confined and his best things so deteriorated, “Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!”

There are many other reasons, doubtless, why the Christian longs to be gone from the company of the ungodly and why he would be far away from them if he could. I shall be content, however, with mentioning one other, namely, the continual process of temptation which surrounds the Christian who is situated in the midst of men of unclean lips. Men lay traps for us and, sometimes, they lay them right warily and craftily—and unless our God has given us the wisdom of the serpent, as well as the harmlessness of the dove, we shall find our heels tripped up before we are aware. Often, in my own case, I am asked questions, apparently by enquirers who are anxious to know something about the Truth of God, only with the desire to entrap me in my words and make some capital out of my answer. And, doubtless, it is so with each one of you. You are questioned merely that your answer may become the theme of ridicule. Some temptation is put in your way—a supposed friend advises you to do this or to do that. Perhaps you do it—and he is the first man to accuse you of having done wrong. Before, he said, “Oh, it is just the thing I would do if I were in your place!”

Perhaps he would—but when he has seen you do it, he has become your accuser—your tempter has afterwards turned round to bring an accusation against you! The Christian will long to be out of a world like this, where there is a Satanic rifleman behind every bush, a devilish archer behind every crag and where, oftentimes, while we are going along some quiet vale of life, all secluded and peaceful, the Archfiend comes behind us and we hear his flattering words and, all of a sudden, he gives a shrill call and from every side, tempters rage! We see everyone of them armed to the teeth and with their arrows winged for flight and thirsty to destroy! And we wonder why we are brought into such a place, where all seemed so calm and secluded—but now we are surrounded by the enemy and we have to cry, “Good Lord, deliver us! Come from above and snatch us out of this danger! Cast down our foes and put our feet in a large place.” Well may God’s dove long to roost in Heaven when there are so many snares here and so many archers with their bows all ready, seeking its life! This made the Psalmist talk of fleeing as a bird to the mountain. Well may we sometimes wish we could do so and even begin to sing, in the language of the poet—

*“Jerusalem, my happy home,  
Name always dear to me,  
When shall my labors have an end,  
In joy, and peace, and thee?”*

II. Having thus spoken a word of justification for the Psalmist’s complaint, I am going, next, TO JUSTIFY THE WAYS OF GOD WITH US, IN HAVING SUBJECTED US TO THIS DWELLING IN THE TENTS OF KEDAR.

Well, Brothers and Sisters, whatever God does is right—we believe that once and for all—if He should do that which seemed, to our reason, to be the most wrong thing in the world, we would believe our reason to be a liar sooner than imagine that God would either be unkind or unwise. It is a happy thing when we can believe God to be right when we cannot see it, when we can trust Him even if we cannot trace Him. It is pleasant to believe that, but we would rather see it. Now, I think, in this case, we can see a little why God deals thus with us.

It is right, and just, and good that God has spared us to be here a little longer, for, in the first place, my Brothers and Sisters, has not God put us here to dwell in the tents of Kedar because these, though perilous places, are advantageous posts for service? The angels, those mighty spirits that serve God perfectly, seem to me to be like the soldiers in an army who bring up the rear. They are behind—there, the arrows do not reach them. When the volleys of Satanic malice are being fired off, the angels are behind and can scarcely hear their echoes. But we that are born of women must face the fire and lead the vanguard in the heavenly battle between the Son of God and that great traitor. We must go into the front rank and every shot must fall upon our harness and rattle upon our armor—and is it not a glorious thing to stand in the front? Who would care to be behind in such a battle as this? Angels might long to come where we are and earnestly desire to stand in the front of the battle—for if this is a place of danger, it is the place of honor, too!

That was a noble speech of our old English king at Agincourt, when he was surrounded by multitudes of enemies, “Well, be it so. I would not lose so great an honor, or divide my triumph. I would not,” he said, “have one man the fewer among my enemies, because then there would be a less glorious victory.” So, in like manner, let us take heart even from our difficulties! The Lord of Hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge. Jehovah-Nissi is inscribed on our banner! We are privileged above all the creatures of God. We have a high and noble honor to fight for Jehovah and, standing out as the soldiers of the Cross—the Church militant of the Divine One—we can do what the angels have not the power to do and, therefore, we have great reason to bless God that He lets us stop here because we are doing something for Him that even they cannot do! If you had been an angel and never been a man, you might sit down, if such thoughts could ever pass through an angelic mind, on some sunny crag high up on the celestial hills and muse thus—“I am a glorious being. The great God has made me to be happy and blest, but, down yonder, on that little planet that is glittering in the light of the sun, there are glorious creatures living that are more blest than I am, for they can do what I must not. They tell of Jesus’ love! They wipe the tears from the eyes of the mourner. I can carry the soul a-loft and I am glad when I have the commission to do so—but I cannot go and bring the wanderer back and tell him how Jesus Christ has bought him with His precious blood.”

I think an angel might almost fold his wings and cherish that wish! If such a thought could ever go through a cherubic spirit, such a wish might be conceived to be quite natural. For really, my Brothers and Sisters, they cannot do what we can do. There are works of charity and resignation, and deeds of heroic suffering that those blessed spirits can never perform. “Give me a body,” says the angel, “and let me be a martyr, for a martyr is greater than an angel. Give me a tongue and let me he a preacher, for the noble army of the Apostles is more noble than the glorious hosts of cherubim and seraphim! They have suffered for God. They have testified for God. They have stood in the midst of a multitude of enemies, firm as a rock in the time of storm—and they have been kept steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.” If there were nothing else to say upon this point, it should certainly be satisfactory enough to the Christian to remember that God has kept him here on purpose to do Him honor.

Yet another thought, my Brothers and Sisters. You never will wish, I am sure, to get away from the tents of Kedar if you will recollect that it was through another Christian tarrying here—when, perhaps, he wanted to be gone—that you are this day a Christian. Look back upon the instrumentality that God used for your conversion. It may have been the teaching of some aged woman who herself had long ago wished to go Home to her Father and her God. But she was kept here, pale and shivering with old age, in order to point you to the City of Refuge. Or, perhaps, it may have been some younger servant of God who preached the Gospel—and you heard it and were blessed. But that man of God had often wished to be in Heaven. Had he been in Heaven when he wished it, where would you have been? It is true, God might have found other instruments, but we are to speak, as men, after the manner of men. Have we not reason to thank God that these instruments were spared and still kept here, that we might be brought to Him by them?

And now, mark, is it not a fact and will you not look out and see whether it is so that there are many of God’s elect ones, purchased with the precious blood of Christ, who are parts of Christ’s mystical body, who are not yet brought in—and you are to bring them in? Brethren, if you were to go to Heaven, now, perhaps you would go almost alone—you must stay till there is a companion to go with you! There are two stars very prominent at this season of the year, the Gemini, the twins, glistening in the sky. You can see them, in about an hour’s time, almost overhead. Yes, and you, perhaps, would have been a star, all alone, in the heavenly firmament, if you had had your own way, but, now, there will be two of you glittering together! And with some of us, blessed be God who has given us this honor, there will be a whole constellation of stars which, though they did not borrow their light from us, yet through us have been able to receive their light from Jesus Christ! And who would like to go to Heaven alone—to go through those bright fields of ether with no other redeemed spirit with him?

I sometimes think it would be a noble thing for the minister of God to have a host behind him and to look back and say, “Who are you that are following after me?” And to hear them reply, “We are they whom God has given you. As the sheaves come with the farmer in the day of harvest, so we are coming with you”—and then to enter Heaven, and cry, “Here am I, and the children that You have given me!” To say, “Here am I,” is a blessed thing, but that other clause, “and those whom You have given me,” that is a grand addition! What must it be to be in Heaven? Glory be to God if we are ever there, but to be in Heaven with others who are given to us—this shall be to multiply Heaven, to heap celestial mountains upon one another, to double the light of the sun, yes, to make it sevenfold, to make Heaven more than Heaven—Heaven multiplied in the Heaven of others! To not simply say, “I see the sun,” but the sun reflected from a thousand glasses—the souls of others who have been led to Christ and then reflect that enjoyment upon the man who, through God, was the means of bringing them to glory! Well, Brothers and Sisters, this should make us willing to stay here.

There is, however, one other reason left, namely, perhaps our Master keeps us in the tents of Kedar because it will make Heaven all the sweeter. The old Romans—you hear a great deal of praise of the Greeks and Romans—but the Greeks were the biggest thieves who ever lived and the Romans were about the greatest gluttons and bullies that ever existed! Well, the Romans were such gluttons that before they came to their meals, they were accustomed to drink all the most bitter things they could, that they might be thirsty and that they might drink as much as they could—very nasty things, such as one would not like to think of— but they always liked to get their palates in such a state that when they drank their wine, they would enjoy it. Verily, Brothers and Sisters, this is something like our case. After those draughts of wormwood which we have had to drink, how sweet Heaven’s nectar will be! Yes, we have had to drink the gall, as we think, to the very dregs—but when that cup is drained and God gives us some of the new wine of the Kingdom, how sweet that will be!

Nothing makes a day of rest so sweet to a man as having long labored and long toiled. The tradesman who goes home to his little country house thinks, “Well, if ever I can make enough to always come and live in this house, I shall be so happy.” He does it—and yet he doesn’t like it—in a week he cannot stand it! The reason he used to enjoy the rest was because the toil of the day sweetened it. Brothers and Sisters, it will be so with us when we get to Heaven—then, when our rest shall last eternally, it will be sweet, indeed! The long wilderness of drought shall make the joys of Heaven rare and real! The waters of the Nile were considered by the Egyptians to have an excellent flavor. Our travelers say it is not so, but the reason is because the Egyptians have never drunk any water but that of the Nile, while we, who have it in all our streets so abundantly, think but little of that turbid stream. Now, we who have had much, but not too much, of sorrow from the men that dwell in the tents of Kedar, how blessed will it be there when we shall be—

*“Far from a world of grief and sin,  
With God eternally shut in!”*

III. My third topic is A WORD OF COMFORT TO THE CHRISTIAN WHILE PLACED IN THESE APPARENTLY EVIL CIRCUMSTANCES.  
Well, there is one word in the text that ought to console him in a case like this. “Woe is me, that I sojourn”—thank God for that word, “sojourn.” Yes, I do not live here forever—I am only a stranger and a sojourner here, as all my fathers were, and though the next sentence does say, “I dwell,” yet, thank God, it is a tent I dwell in and that will come down, by-andby—“I dwell in the tents of Kedar.” You men of this world, you may have your day, but your day will soon be over! And I will have my nights, but my nights will soon be over, too. It is not for long, Christian, it is not for long. They may laugh at you, but every day they laugh, that is one day less for you to be laughed at. They may scoff and mock, and set you in the pillory with cruelty, but you will not be there forever. Perhaps tomorrow you may be in Heaven—we never know how near we are to the gates of Paradise. But, at any rate, suppose we should live to the longest period of human life? It is not long, after all.  
When we get home to Heaven and come to look back, what a short way it will seem! While we are travelling in it, and our feet are covered with blisters and sores, we think all the inches are miles, but when we get up there, we shall say, “Why, that light affliction was but for a moment. I thought ‘twas half a century, but, ‘twas but for a moment—yet it has worked out for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” We say, sometimes, “God has appointed unto us wearisome days and nights of weeping.” But when we are in Heaven, we shall say, “Weeping endured but for a night, but joy came in the morning.” I say to the Christian—

*“The way may be rough, but it cannot be long, So let’s smooth it with hope, and cheer it with song.”*

Up, Christian! A few successful struggles and you will not have one more conflict! Another blow or two and your foot shall be on your opponent’s neck! What? Give up the battle when it is near its termination? Would you sit down in the shade when the sun is rising and the morning star of promise is giving you the first token of the dawn? Cheer up, cheer up, I beseech you! The end will make amends for all that you endure and you will thank God that He kept you, and blessed you, and enabled you to suffer and endure and, at last, brought you safely Home!

This, however, is not all the comfort I have for you, because that would look like something at the end, like the child who has the promise of something while it is taking its medicine. No, there is something to comfort you during your trials. Remember that even while you are in the tents of Kedar, you have blessed company, for God is with you! And though you sojourn with the sons of Mesech, yet there is Another with whom you sojourn, namely, your blessed Lord and Master! You are not alone, for Christ is with you! It is true that those who are around you are uncongenial companions, but then, there is One who walks through the midst of all these scenes and snares, who says to you, “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God.” There may be a noise in the street, but Christ is with you in your chamber. There may be a storm within your very doors—a husband who will not let you rest and children who cast your religion in your teeth—but there is another Husband in that house, too, a heavenly Husband—and His consolations are far more powerful than all the sneers of the other husband—the manna that He gives is so sweet that it can take all the bitterness out of the sarcasms of your foes!

Surely, when Christ is with us, the bitterness of death is past. Much more, then, the bitterness of those little trials which daily come to us from those sons of Mesech and those inhabitants of the tents of Kedar. If, my Lord, You will go with me, I will not choose the path. If I must go alone, alas, alas for me, though the road is grassy, the sky is clear, the sun is bright and the brooks are flowing on every side! Though the birds are singing on the trees and though my own eyes have a luster in them, yet I am miserable, I am wretched, I am unsafe, I am in danger if You are not with me! But come, my Master, if the sun is set, if no moon or stars appear, if all around me there are found those that would devour me. If there is a ditch on this side and a yawning gulf or a quagmire on the other. If there are all kinds of horrible things and evil spirits—if under my feet there are dead men’s bones, snares, chains and pitfalls—if over me there is the shadow of death that keeps the sunlight from reaching me and if within my heart there is fear, yet, if You are with me, into the very gates of Hell, itself, my soul should enter unharmed! Through the wall of fire, amidst the blazing of Divine Vengeance my soul may walk unscathed! Nothing can harm me if Jesus is near. Does not this make the tents of Kedar as white and fair as the tents of Solomon if Jesus has visited them? And are not the men of Mesech, with their rough beards, their stern faces and their unknown tongues, as friendly angels when we know that Jesus Christ is with us forevermore?

I have but one thing more to say, and with that I shall conclude. Brothers and Sisters, you may be comforted yet again with this sweet thought—that not only is God with you, but your Master was once in the tents of Kedar—not merely spiritually, but personally, even as you are— and inasmuch as you are here, too, this, instead of being painful, should be comforting to you! Have you not received a promise that you shall be like your Head? Thank God that promise has begun to be fulfilled! If you were happy in the tents of Kedar, you might think, “I am not like my Master, for He was a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief.” But inasmuch as you have evil things thrown at you and your way is hard and rough, you may say, “Now I know what it is to have fellowship with Him in suffering, in some feeble measure. As I was buried with Him in Baptism unto death, so with Him I trust I have had conformity unto His death.” When any pang from slander or misrepresentation rends your heart, then you can say, “Now I know what He meant when He said, ‘Reproach has broken My heart.’” When you find yourself abused and misrepresented, you can say, “Now I understand what Christ endured when they said He is a gluttonous Man and a winebibber; a friend of publicans and sinners.”

It is worthwhile to be like Christ in the worst of times because that is an assurance that we shall be like He in the best of times! If I carry a cross as He carried one, I shall wear a crown as He wears one. If I have been with Him in the degradation of the flesh, I shall be with Him in the glory of the Spirit. If I have been with Him when men hooted and hissed, and dogs compassed Him, and the bulls of Bashan beset Him around, I shall be with Him, too, when angelic hosts are around Him and He shall be admired of all that love Him—and adored of all creation! You shall be like your Head, poor sufferer—like your Head! Then what more can you want? Is not this a sufficient honor, that the servant is as his Master and the subject is as his Sovereign?

This may seem strange language in the ears of some hearers. All that they know is that they sometimes sneer at Christians themselves. Well, Sir, you have spoken ill of your wife and children because they follow Christ. I would not be in your shoes for half the world, nor for the whole of it! Do you see that man there with the millstone around his neck? He is going to be cast into the midst of the sea—that man is better off than you are, for Christ has said it, “Whoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in Me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he were cast into the sea.” Don’t laugh at a Christian or a professing Christian, even if he is a beggar, for he may be a child of God—and it will be an ill thing for you to be caught laughing at a child of God! There is nothing that makes a man so angry as to laugh at his children. There is nothing which brings a man’s spirit up like touching his children. “Say what you like against me, but don’t say anything against them. Touch them,” says the man, “and you touch me. Touch them and you shall feel my wrath.” Our Father loves them and he that touches them touches the apple of His eye. If you want to be damned, go and do something else, but don’t do that! But if you want to go to Hell and to the hottest fire of Hell, go and vent your spleen on God’s people! If you do it, you shall surely be punished for it.

Herod shall be eaten of worms, though his voice is as the voice of a god and not of a king. There shall be creatures who, like Antiochus, shall have their very bowels burnt because they hurt the people of God—and you who touch them with your little finger shall feel the weight of the Divine arm! And if you have smitten them with the arm, you shall find His loins crushing you to the very lowest Hell! But, remember, there is mercy for the persecutor. Did not the Lord say, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me? It is hard for you to kick against the pricks.” “John, John, why do you persecute Me?” “Lord, I only laugh at my little daughter.” “You have persecuted Me—it is hard for you to kick against the pricks.” “Thomas, Thomas, why do you persecute Me?” “But, Lord, I only told my wife I would shut her out if she went to the weeknight services.” “You have done it unto Me, inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of these, My people.” And He cries to you and says, “It is hard for you to kick with naked feet against these pricks.” And do you say, “Who are You, Lord?” His answer is, “I am Jesus, whom you persecute.” And then, if you say, “Can You forgive me, Lord?” His answer is, “I am ready and willing to forgive. ‘Come now, and let us reason together, though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.’” Trust in Jesus and you are safe! Cast yourself, once and for all on Him, and you cannot be lost, for he that relies on Jesus is a saved man! May God add the blessing of His Spirit, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **MARK 16.**

Verse 1. And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him. True love had made a mistake, but it was true love for all that, and the Lord accepted it, although He had no need of the sweet spices that the women brought.

2. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun. There had already been another rising of the sun that morning, for the Sun of Righteousness had risen and, with His rising, our hopes had risen and eternal life had come to light! These holy women proved their affection to their Lord by being there so early. Love will not wait—it delights to render its service as speedily as it can—“they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun.”

3, 4. And they said among themselves, Who shall roll away the stone from the door of the sepulcher for us? And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great. Take comfort from this verse, you who are seeking to serve your Lord. There will be sure to be stones in your way and some of them may be very great ones, but they will be rolled away in the Lord’s good time. And in the rolling away you often will have all the greater joy. If the effort shall need the strength of an angel, then an angel will be sent from Heaven for the purpose. There might have been no angel if there had been no stone—and you might have no revelation of the power of Heaven to help you if you had not first had a revelation of your own weakness and inability to roll away the stone.

5. And entering into the sepulcher, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment; and they were frightened. An angel had assumed the appearance of a young man sitting inside the sepulcher.

6. And he said unto them, Be not afraid. Why should they be afraid? They had come to serve their Lord and so had the angel, so there was no cause for fear. Those who love Jesus need never be afraid of angels, nor, for that matter, of devils either, for the Lord, whom they serve, will take care of them.

6. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. This was the first Gospel sermon preached after the Resurrection, so note particularly how the angel describes Christ. He calls Him by His lowly name, “Jesus of Nazareth,” and does not speak of Him as the risen or reigning Christ, but as “Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified.” The angels are evidently not ashamed of the Cross of Christ—they do not attempt to hide the shame of it—for this one speaks of “Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified.”

6. He is risen; He is not here. That is the epitaph inscribed on Christ’s tomb—“He is not here.” On other people’s graves it is written, “Here lies so-and-so,” but on Christ’s sepulcher it is recorded, “He is not here.” He is everywhere else, but, “He is not here.” He is with us in our solitude. He is with us in our public assemblies. But there is one place where He is not and that is, in the empty tomb! Thank God that He is not there! we do not worship a dead man lying in the grave. He, on whom we rely, has risen from the dead and gone up into Glory where He always lives to carry out the great design of salvation! “He is not here.”

6-8. Behold the place where they laid Him. But go your way, tell His disciples and Peter that He goes before you into Galilee: there shall you see Him, as He said unto you. And they went out quickly, and fled from the sepulcher; for they trembled and were amazed: neither said they anything to any man; for they were afraid. There was a mixture of joy with their fear, and of fear with their joy—and that tended to keep them silent for a while. Some people tell all they know, even when it would be wiser not to speak. But these godly women waited till they reached those to whom they were bid to speak. They said nothing to anybody by the way, but hurried on to find the disciples, that they might give them the blessed tidings of their Lord’s Resurrection!

9. Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils. Where Grace had worked its greatest wonders, there Christ paid His first visit—“He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils.”

10, 11. And she went and told them that had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that He was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not. I can imagine that scene—the weeping and mourning disciples—and this eager woman telling her story, and telling it with evident truthfulness and deep pathos, but they believed her not. Do you expect to be believed whenever you tell the story of your Lord’s Resurrection, or any other part of the Gospel message? You have to tell it, not to Christ’s disciples, but to those who are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and, probably, you do not tell it as well as Mary Magdalene did. Marvel not, therefore, if many a time those who hear your message believe it not! Mind that you believe it yourself and keep on telling it whether others believe it or not—and God will bless it to some of them, by-and-by

12, 13. After that He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. And they went and told it unto the rest, but they did not believe them either. Unbelief is not easily driven out of even true disciples, but let none of us ever harbor it in our hearts. As we see how unbelieving these disciples were and know how wrong their unbelief was, let us not be like they were.

14-20. Afterward He appeared unto the eleven as they sat at the table, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen. And He said unto them, Go you into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe. In My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, He was received up into Heaven, and sat at the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with accompanying signs. Amen. God bless to us the reading of His holy Word! Amen.

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WAKEFUL AND WATCHFUL EYES  
NO. 2654

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, DECEMBER 24, 1899.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, AUGUST 13, 1882.

**“Behold, He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.” Psalm 121:4.**

**“Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hands of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hands of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until He has mercy on us.” Psalm 123:2.**

NOTICE, dear Friends, that both these texts begin with the word, “Behold.” That word is meant to attract the readers’ attention. In some books, which are intended to be sensational, you are asked to behold— and when you look, there is nothing to see! But when God’s Word bids you behold what it has to say, you may be sure that the exclamation is not superfluous or misleading! It would be a marring of the Word of God to leave out even one of its smallest expressions and, therefore, when we see this word, “Behold,” placed at the beginning of each of these texts, we may rest assured that there is, in both of them, something worth noting, worth examining and considering—and worth remembering and carrying away!

A very useful series of discourses might be preached upon the “Beholds” of the Old and New Testaments which culminate in John the Baptist’s, “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,” and Pilate’s, “Behold the Man.” And still more in our Lord’s own message to John, “Behold, I come quickly.” But two Old Testament, “Beholds,” are to furnish us with a theme of meditation at this time. It is somewhat singular that they both relate to eyes. The first tells us about God’s eyes— “Behold, He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.” His eyes are never closed. No feeling of weariness or need of slumber ever causes them to be heavy and to shut. And the second text tells us about our eyes—“Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until He has mercy on us.”

See, Brothers and Sisters, both our texts speak about eyes, and they ask for the use of our eyes by saying, “Behold,” which is as though God said to us, “I am going to tell you about My eyes which never slumber. Therefore, look and see, for you shall find them always open and always watching over you.” Then the next text tells us about our eyes and reminds us how God gives to His people clear and quick eyesight, so that they observe all the motions of their Master’s hands and are glad to note them—and prompt to do as He directs. I have put these two texts together because I hoped that when you saw with joy how the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous and His ears open to their cries, you would then feel that it was a fit return that your eyes should be unto the Lord your God, and that your ears should be open to receive His teaching and to learn His commands. God grant that this may be the result of the sermon upon these two texts!

I. First, then, I am to speak to you concerning THE WAKEFUL EYES OF THE LORD OUR GOD. We are told, in our first text, that the Lord, who keeps Israel, shall neither slumber nor sleep.

We learn from these words, first, that the Lord keeps Israel. Read the 121st Psalm through and you will find the word, “preserve,” or, “keep,” or, “keeper,” repeated many times. God has Himself undertaken the work of keeping His people—it is His high office to preserve those who are His chosen ones!

“He that keeps Israel.” By this expression we understand that the Lord keeps His people as a shepherd keeps his flock. There is a great depth of meaning in that word, “keep,” as it is thus used, for a shepherd keeps the sheep by feeding them, by supplying all their needs and also by guarding them from all their adversaries. He keeps the flock with vigilance so that it is not diminished either by the ravaging wolf or by the straying of the sheep. Even an ordinary shepherd takes great pains and the utmost care to preserve his sheep both by night and by day—while, “our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep,” who was brought again from the dead, uses His Omnipotence, His Omniscience and all His Divine Attributes in the keeping of His sheep! O Beloved, if you are, indeed, His people and the sheep of His pasture, rest assured that He will preserve you! You are in good keeping, for He is the Good Shepherd, and the Great Shepherd, and the Chief Shepherd and He will perform all the duties of His office well and faithfully, that He may securely keep all whom His Father has committed unto Him!

Another figure may equally well illustrate the meaning of this expression. The Lord keeps His people, not only as a shepherd keeps his sheep, but as a king keeps his jewels. These are rare and precious things which are his peculiar treasure and he will not lose them if he can help it. He will go to war sooner than be deprived of them. He will put them in the most secure case that he has in his strong room—and set his most faithful servants to guard the place wherein they are stored. He will charge those who have the custody of his crown jewels to take a full and accurate account of them—and to be careful to examine them, from time to time, to see that they are all there, for he greatly prizes them and is not willing for one of them to be lost. They probably cost him a great price, or, if not, they are part of his royal heritage and of the glory and honor of his kingdom, so he desires to keep them all. Even so does the Lord Jesus keep His people, for they are His jewels. He delights in them—they are His honor and His glory! They cost Him a greater price than they can ever realize. He hides them away in the case of His power and protects them with all His wisdom and strength. Concerning those who feared the Lord and thought upon His name, it is written, “They shall be Mine, says the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels.” It is God’s work to keep His own jewels. He does not commit them even to the custody of the tall archangel who stands nearest to His Throne, but the Lord, Himself, keeps them—and no one shall be able to pluck them out of His hands!

This is not all, for we might multiply figures to almost any extent and still not exhaust the meaning of the text. The Lord keeps His people as a governor keeps the city committed to his charge. He places his guards around the walls, he has his cannon on the battlements to defend the place against those who besiege it. And he is constantly on the watch. Early in the morning and late at night he is on the walls—and through the night, the watchmen keep their continual rounds, for the city must be preserved from scaling ladders and from assaults of every sort. The Lord will not let even the suburbs of the New Jerusalem be conquered by the foe! He will preserve the holy city, His own Church, until the day when His Son shall come to reign in her forever.

I find that in all probability, the figure here used is an allusion to the common custom of having guards to watch the tents of travelers passing through the desert. At this very time, if you were journeying through the Holy Land, you would find that when you came to your camping ground, and nightfall drew on, there would be certain persons employed to watch over the different tents, for, otherwise, the wandering robbers of the desert would soon enter and take away your valuables, or even your life. I have noticed in the books of two or three travelers, this observation, “We found it exceedingly difficult to obtain a tent-keeper who could stay awake all night.” One gentleman speaks of discovering a thief in his tent and when he went outside to call the watchman, he found that the man had gone so soundly to sleep that he could only be awakened by one or two gentle kicks! When a man has been traveling with you all day, it is unreasonable to expect him to stay awake through the night to take care of you. Therefore, see the beauty of the expression used by the Psalmist, “Behold, He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.” There shall be no deep sleep falling upon Him! No, there shall not even be a brief period of slumber, not even a wink of sleep shall ever overcome Him! A man may say, “I am so tired that I cannot keep my eyes open,” but God never says that.

Now turn to the second part of our first text—“Behold, He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep,” and think, first, of God’s eyes as never wearying of His people. I suppose that the fondest mother is sometimes glad when she can put her children to bed and have a little quiet time by herself. She at last grows weary even of their pretty ways and she is willing to let them go out of her sight for a while. But the Lord never grows weary of His people. If some of you had such children as God has, you would never be able to endure their trying ways. None but the God of Infinite patience could bear with such a family as He has. Any one of us might exhaust the patience of a hundred Jobs rolled into one—yet, shout it out and let even the angels hear it—we have not exhausted the patience of God! He has never been so wearied and worried by us as to say, “I must go to sleep, My children, and leave you to take care of yourselves.” Our Savior’s eyes are never weary of looking on us—those eyes that closed upon the Cross and then that opened, again, on the Resurrection morning, like bright stars. Those eyes that, from the heights of Heaven, have looked down upon the redeemed with ineffable delight of love—those eyes never grow weary of the chosen ones! Our Lord Jesus has such joy in His people as keeps Him from ever being weary of them. That is one meaning of His never slumbering or sleeping.

The next is, that God is never forgetful of His people for a single moment. You and I forget things which we most need to remember. Have you not, my Sister, often shifted your ring from one finger to another and then had to say to yourself, “How did it come to be here?” And then you remembered the reason why you removed it? Yes, I know you have done so and we have had a hundred ingenious inventions to keep us in mind of something that we wished not to forget—yet we have forgotten it, after all. The fondest human heart at times forgets, but that Divine heart, alone, never does. And those eyes which look down on us with Infinite love flashing forth from them are never sealed in the slumber of forgetfulness. We forget all things in our sleep and lie completely indifferent to all that is happening around us, but God never does so—He never forgets us and He is never indifferent to us. Oh, what a blessed Truth of God this is!

Sleep also throws us into a condition in which we are incapable of helping ourselves. But God is never in such a state as that. He is always awake to show Himself strong on the behalf of those who trust Him. You will never have to call to Him in vain, or get from Him the answer, “I cannot help you right now.” Elijah, in his irony, said that perhaps Baal was sleeping, or on a journey, and the idol god was quite unable to deliver those that called upon him. But our God, who made the heavens, is quick to hear the faintest cry of any of His people! He is perpetually girt with all might and energy—if you do but appeal to Him, He will speedily fly to your relief! Yes, He will fly upon the wings of the wind, for He is prompt to deliver all those who put their case into His hands. God is never asleep in the sense that He is unable to help us.

And, moreover, God is never asleep in the sense that He ceases to consider us. I do not know whether you can catch the thought so as to lay hold of it by faith, but we have an instance of it in the 40th Psalm where David says, “I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinks upon me.” When? Now? Yes. Tomorrow? Yes. And yesterday? Yes. He was always thinking of us and He is always thinking of us! The Infinite mind of God can think of all things at once. You and I, in thinking of one thing, often forget another—but it is not so with God. He is so great that His center is everywhere and His circumference is nowhere! And you, dear Brother or Sister, may be the very center of God’s thoughts and so may I—and all His redeemed may at the same moment have His thoughts fixed upon each one of them! Can you realize the wondrous Truth of God that there is never a moment, night or day, in which the great mind of the Eternal ceases to think of you? Then, how safe you are with God always looking upon you! How happy you ought to be with God always thinking of you! Yes, how joyful you ought to be because, even if others forget you, He never does!

You remember how Cowper represents Alexander Selkirk, when far away an that island of Juan Fernandez, saying—  
*“My friends, do they now and then send*

*A wish or a thought after me?”*  
He could not bear, in his loneliness, to be altogether forgotten by everybody. And none of us would like to be in that condition, but even if we were in such a plight, we could still find comfort in that ancient promise, “Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, they may forget.” It is rarely enough that mothers are so unnatural—still, “they may forget. Yet,” says the LORD, “will I not forget you.” Oh, drink that down! Is it not a sweet draught? Of all the luscious drinks that men ever delighted in, there can be none with such flavor as this choice wine of Covenant faithfulness!

So much, then, for our first text, “Behold, He that keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.” I have only given you a few brief hints. Lay them up in your memories and come with me to consider our second text, “Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until He has mercy on us.”

II. The lesson of these words is that THE WATCHFUL EYES OF THE SAINTS ARE FIXED UPON THEIR GOD.  
Which is the more wonderful text of the two? Certainly, it is a great marvel that God should always fix His eyes upon us, but I think it is a greater marvel that you and I should ever be brought to fix our eyes on God! For God to look at His people is according to His own Nature, but

for us to look upon God, is something superior to human nature—it isthe gift of God and the work of Sovereign Grace! I think that both looks are to be regarded as miracles of mercy. For a child of God to be so sanctified that He always fixes His eyes upon God, as a servant does upon his master’s hands—this is a very eminent degree of sanctification and is a thing worthy to be looked at, and worthy to have the word, “Behold,” put before it! I wonder whether you and I have yet reached such a height of consecration to God as to be able to truly use the language of this text?

Alas, in many cases we cannot get men’s eyes fixed upon God at all. There is this natural world, with all its wondrous beauty. God has painted every flower and tinged the clouds with the glory of the setting sun. He is everywhere and yet men walk through His great house of nature and—fools that they are—they say, “There is no God.” It is hard to get men to see God. We put the Bible into their hands. They read it and are interested in its stories, but they see not God in it. Providence comes to their very doors with marvels, yet they say that they do not see God’s hand in anything that happens to them! And even when we preach—and this is the woe of woes—we cannot get men to look to the Lord! God knows that I have never tried to speak that you would think of me for a single moment. I have sought to tell my tale as plainly as I could and to force it home on man’s hearts and consciences as God might help me. And yet, at the end of the sermon, often the hearer’s only remark is, “How did you like him?” It does not matter at all how you like me! Is that what we came here for—to fiddle to you, as men do in your orchestras, or speak before you as if we were mere actors playing for your amusement? It is of no concern to us what you think of our style or manner—it is the Truth of God itself which we would drive home to you! It is that Truth of God which, if we could, we would make you feel as the ox feels the sharp goad! It is the blessed Doctrine of Christ Crucified which we would have you feed upon, as the hungry man devours the bread that is given to him and does not care whether he ever knows the baker’s name, or not! Still, I must say again that it is a hard thing to get men to see God. They look around, above, beneath, everywhere—but to get them to fix their eyes upon God, “This is the work. This is the difficulty.”

The man of God who wrote this 123rd Psalm had been taught to look to God in a very remarkable manner. And I call your attention to it in the hope that many of you will do likewise. First, his eyes were reverentially fixed upon the Lord. He looked to God’s hands, wherever they were, with deep reverence—“as the eyes of servants look unto the hands of their masters.” He was, of course, talking about Oriental servants—the Hebrew word bears the meaning of slaves—and travelers tell us that when they go into the house of a wealthy person in the East, the master will give certain signs to his slaves and refreshments are brought in. But, except when they are called, the servants stand at a distance, watching for the slightest motion of their master’s hands—they do not have the liberties that we happily accord to our servants—they are nothing and nobody, mere tools for their master to use as he pleases. And, as to the maidens, I have heard that the women in the East have a harder time of it with their mistresses than the men do with their masters and that the lady of the house is a more severe taskmaster than her husband is. So the maidens watch their mistress’ hands very carefully, for they are sorely afraid of them—and they look with great care and fear to see what “Madam” would have them do. Now, casting aside everything of human fear out of the figure, this is the way in which we ought to look to God— He is in Heaven—we are upon earth. He is great—we are nothing. He is good—we are lumps of sin. It is for us, therefore, with the utmost reverence, to seek to learn God’s will in every point—in His Word and in His works—and at once, without question, reverently to do what He commands us.

The next point is that the truly sanctified man looks to God’s hands with obedience as well as with reverence. Orientals, as a general rule, speak far less than we do, except when they sit around the fire at eventide and tell their tales. But an Eastern master seldom speaks. A gentleman went, some time ago, into an Eastern house and as soon as he entered, the master waved his hand and the servants brought in sherbet. He waved his hand again, and they brought dried fruits. Then he moved his hands in a different way and they began to spread the table and, all the time, not a word was spoken, but they perfectly understood the motion of his hands! They had to look sharply to see how the master moved his hands so that they might do what that motion meant. We have not very much of that dumb action among us, but, on board a steamboat you may see the captain moving his hands this way or that, and the call-boy is ready at once to pass the word down to those who are in charge of the engine.

That is just how the child of God should watch the hands of God in the Bible and in Providence, so as to do at once whatever we plainly perceive to be our Lord’s will. Ah, me, I know some professing Christians who will not do God’s will till they have had a good whipping, or not until they have been chastened again and again! Remember that ancient injunction, “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”? You know how the drivers have to pull at their reins. They say, “This creature is so hard in the mouth that we do not know how to manage him at all.” And some of God’s people are terribly hard in the mouth—they need very rough handling to make them move. Yet we ought to be different from horses and mules. We ought to be ready at once, at a beck, or a wink, or a nod, to know what God would have us do—and do it reverently and obediently.

Then, also, our eyes should be absolutely fixed upon our Lord. The eyes of servants ought to be so directed to their masters that they not only see the sign, but obey it, whatever it means. It may be a very little thing, but yet the little thing should not be neglected. I would again say what I sometimes feel ashamed of having to say. I sometimes meet with a person who says, with regard to the matter of Believers’ Baptism, “Now, you know that Baptism will not save me.” You evil, miserable soul! Will you do nothing but what is necessary for your salvation? Is that the spirit that drives you? Will you do only what is necessary to save your poor soul, which is hardly worth saving if you talk like that? It is too small a thing to be worth anything, but unless Baptism will save your soul, you will not attend to it? “Well,” says another, “I have reversed the Scriptural order—I have put my baptism before my believing.” Who gave you leave to alter the Lord’s order? If servants were to act like that, what mischief we would have! Suppose they were to bring us in our dessert before they brought in our dinner—that would be a very small affair, yet it is important to observe the right order even in such matters! Or suppose we were to tell them to sweep the room and dust it—and they should dust the room and then sweep it? It is only altering the order, but you know what would happen! So is it with those who put Baptism first and believing afterwards—it spoils the whole transaction—and it violates the intention of God in the ordinance. You have no right to act like that!

I may remind you of a story which I think I told you some time ago. A poor youth earnestly wished to join the Church, but his friends thought he was somewhat deficient in brain power and that he had better not be baptized. He lay sick and was evidently dying. And he said to his mother, “Mother, I wish I had been baptized and joined the Church.” She replied, “My dear boy, you know that being baptized would not have saved you. You will go to Heaven because you have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ.” “Oh, yes,” he said, “I know that! You do not think I am so stupid as to fancy that Baptism would save me, do you, Mother? I know that has nothing to do with going to Heaven! But when I get there, I shall see my Savior and, perhaps He will say to me, ‘Isaac, why did you not join the Church?’ If I should say, ‘Lord, that was a very little thing,’ He would say, ‘Yes, then you might have done it to please Me.’” That story is just to the point—the smaller the matter is, the more careful we should be to attend to it, if it would please the Lord Jesus Christ! Do not be so clever, you servants who fancy that you know better than your Master, for perhaps He may find somebody else to be His servant if you behave like that!

Suppose that I was starting on a journey, early in the morning, and I said to my servant, “I would like a cup of coffee before I start”? And suppose that when I came down, she brought me a glass of cold water? I would ask her, “Why did you do that?” If she should reply, “Oh, Sir, I thought that the water would be better for you than coffee!” I would say, “Well, I am very much obliged to you for thinking of me in that considerate way, but I shall have to engage another servant who does what she is told.” So I advise you not to alter or judge God’s Word, but to obey it! Do not begin to calculate as to whether what you read in His Word is right in your sight, or in the eyes of other people—the one question for you is— Has my Lord bid me do this? If so, then, as the eyes of the maiden are to her mistress, so let your eyes be unto the Lord your God!

Once more, our eyes are to be turned ONLY to the Lord. The Eastern servant is not allowed to think. It is no business of his to have his eyes upon his master’s guests. They are to be fixed upon his master. And the maiden does not think it to be her business to watch the movements of the hands of the lady who calls to see her mistress—her eyes are to be on the hands of her mistress. She does not dare to take them off, for, perhaps, just when she is looking out of the window, or gazing in curiosity at some object, her mistress may be waving her hand and she may not see it. And then there will be a serious scolding and possibly something worse when the mistress gets her alone. So you and I must not take our eyes off our God at any time—His way and His will must be our only law—and for this we must live, that we may please Him whose servants we are, for has He not bought us with His precious blood? So we are not our own, we are “bought with a price.”

“Ah,” says one, “we have not come to that yet.” No, I fear you have not, but you ought to. There is no peace for us till we do. He who, either by omission or commission, neglects to do or goes beyond His Lord’s command will find sorrow in his soul. Depend upon it, the roots of our most bitter griefs strike into our sins and, if our sins were overcome, the major part of our sorrows would be removed! Oh that God would give us Grace to be very tender in conscience, to tremble before Him, as well as to rejoice before Him, for in very deed the man who does not tremble at His Word has not yet learned to truly love Him!

Now I must speak to some here who, perhaps, know nothing about what I have been saying, for they have lived without God. I will finish my sermon by just reminding you that this may do very well for this world— though it is a poor business at the best—but when you come to die, you will need God! Now, when I die and go to be with God, I know that Christ will not say to me, “I never knew you.” I am sure He cannot because He has long known me. I was about to say that He has known me to His cost, for I have long been a beggar at His door every day and I cannot live without Him. I am naked, poor and miserable apart from Him. I have always some errand or other to make me go to Him—some sin to confess, or some need to be supplied. So He knows me well enough. You are sure to know a beggar who is always at your door. Perhaps he says that he has not been there before, but you reply, “Why you have been here every morning for the last six weeks! I have always seen you begging here the first thing in the morning.” You cannot say that you do not know him, yet that is what will happen to those of you who have never sought the Lord Jesus Christ and never prayed to Him. Christ will say to you, “I never knew you.”

I feel that the spot I occupy just now is a very solemn one, for, like the captain of a ship, I can see all over this place. Often, when I come here on a Sunday, somebody says, “So-and-So has gone.” There is one gone out of that seat which you occupy, my Friend. He was there last Sabbath, but he has gone. And I can point to many of you and say, “You are sitting in the seat where one used to sit whose face was vary familiar to me, but he has gone Home.” And some go to my great surprise. I have thought to see them again many times, and when I have missed them, I have said, “Oh, she has gone to the seaside for a little holiday.” But someone has said to me, “No, she is dead. She was suddenly taken away.” Or, “He was called away only this last week.” Ah, me! Ah, me! And what faces I may be looking into now that I shall never see again! Give me your hand, my Friend, for this is the last time I may ever speak to you. I beg you to get ready to go on that last long journey. Oh, do not die unsaved! I beseech you, do not attempt to enter the eternal world, with all its dread, without a Savior!

This is the way of salvation. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! Trust yourself with Him! Put your soul, as a sacred deposit, into the hands of that dear Banker whose bank has never failed—no, more—who has never lost a penny that was entrusted to Him! And before you sleep, just rest in Jesus. God help you to do so, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—194, 119 (SONG VI), 123, 538. EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **JEREMIAH 30:1-22.**

Verses 1, 2. The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Thus speaks the LORD God of Israel, saying, Write you all the words that I have spoken unto you in a book. We believe in Verbal Inspiration and, though some people treat with contempt the very ides of words being Inspired, be you sure of this, if you have not Inspired Words, you are not likely to get Inspired men! Besides, words are to the thought what the shell is to the egg and if you break the shell, you have destroyed the egg. Somehow or other, the thought will ooze out unless it is conveyed in God’s own Words. Observe that the Lord does not say to Jeremiah, “Write you all the thought that I have given you,” but, “Write you all the words that I have spoken unto you in a book.”

3. For, lo, the days come, says the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of My people Israel and Judah, says the LORD: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it. And so they did, and so they shall in a yet fuller sense, for this is a promise that has fulfillments and fulfillments. Man’s promises, once kept, are ended, but God’s promises are perpetual—they are springing wells which never run dry! That which He fulfilled once, He often takes the opportunity to fulfill again on a yet larger scale, as He will doubtless do to His ancient people in the latter days. You who are in spiritual captivity tonight may derive comfort from these words, “I will bring again the captivity of My people.” It is the way of God to deliver the captives. What He does once is only an index of what He is in the habit of doing. It is God’s delight to devise means by which He will bring back His banished ones. So, in due time, He will end your captivity and you shall enjoy the blessed liberty which is the portion of His people.

4, 5. And these are the words that the LORD spoke concerning Israel and concerning Judah. For thus says the LORD, We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. God hears His people’s voices when they cry. He knows the tone and accent which they use and, sometimes, when He is listening to them, He hears “a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace.” Possibly that may be the condition of some who are here tonight. If so, may the Lord, who hears their cry, bring them out of their trembling and fear—and fill their mouth with laughter and their tongue with singing!

6, 7. Ask you now, and see whether a man does travail with child? Therefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. This passage evidently alludes to a time of very great distress, when men’s hearts were swollen within them as if they would burst for very grief. Not simply here and there one, but the great mass of the people seemed to be in sore trouble. Even the stout-hearted ones began to feel inward pangs of affliction, yet it was then that the Lord said, “It is even the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.”

8. For it shall come to pass in that day, says the LORD of Hosts, that I will break his yoke from off your neck, and will burst your bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him. Here is a word for you tried ones! God, who sometimes permits His child to wear the yoke of the oppressor, will take that yoke away! He will snap the bands that are around your neck and enable you to rise into the glorious liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free! O enslaved ones, be of good comfort and look for speedy deliverance through the power of the great Emancipator!

9, 10. But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them. Therefore fear you not, O My servant Jacob, says the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save you from afar, and your seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid. There are great things in reserve for God’s ancient people Israel, but there are not less laid up for God’s spiritual Israel, for by them shall the greatest fulfillment of the promise be realized! They shall indeed be quiet and none shall make them afraid. Note that these are the very men who had their hands upon their loins and whose faces were pale with fright! These are they who were ready to die of heartbreak! Yet even they shall, by the rich Grace of God, be in rest and quiet—and no one shall make them afraid. I wish that we could all realize the fulfillment of that promise even now and that our gracious God would dwell with us as He is known to abide with those who bear His name and thus give us that blessed quiet and rest which we so much need.

11. For I am with you, says the LORD, to save you: though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, yet will I not make a full end of you: but I will correct you in measure, and will not leave you altogether unpunished. Look abroad and see what God has done to Israel. This is peculiarly the time of Israel’s trouble and the Jewish people were, perhaps, never worse persecuted than they now are in certain parts of the world. Yet the Lord will not allow any nation to crush them and He will, Himself, avenge all wrongs that they suffer. He still says to them, “He that touches you touches the apple of My eye.” And it is very noteworthy that whenever God has used any nation as a rod to chasten the Jews— and He has used many in that way—He has always broken that kingdom up when He is done with it. Think of Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. Look at Spain and see how mean and despicable that nation has become because of its cruelty to the people of God. Now, if this is true of Israel after the flesh, depend upon it that it is also true concerning God’s spiritual people! Though He will correct us when we deserve chastening, it will always be in measure and He will not make a full end of us. God has measureless wrath against the ungodly for their measureless sin, but as for His own people, He has cast their sin behind His back and only as a wise and faithful Father does He chasten them for that sin.

12-14. For thus says the LORD, Your bruise is incurable, and your wound is grievous. There is none to plead your cause, that you may be bound up. You have no healing medicines. All your lovers have forgotten you; they seek you not; for I have wounded you with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one, for the multitude of your iniquity; because your sins were increased. God never gave His people leave to sin—and sin in them is worse than sin in any other people, for they sin against more light, more love and, therefore, it grieves the Lord more— and He smites all the more heavily and, mark you, when God smites, there is nobody who can comfort us! A quaint old writer, whose book I was reading the other day, commenting on that part of the parable where the friend, disturbed at midnight, said, “My children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you,” wrote something like this, “When God is in bed, there are none of His children up to help us. If He does not open the door, there are none of His saints to give us a crust—all must come from Him.” Therefore we must cry unto Him and say, “Awake for my help, O God; for all my lovers have forgotten me; they seek me not in the time of my distress.” When God wounds us, men often desert us—and those that seemed to be most fond of us forsake us when God smites us.

15, 16. Why do you cry for your affliction? Your sorrow is incurable for the multitude of your iniquity: because your sins were increased, I have done these things to you. Therefore all they that devour you shall be devoured. How striking is this sentence! And what a surprise it gives us as we read it! We might have thought, after the Lord had spoken as He did, that He would have given His people up to their enemies, but, instead of doing so, He says, “Therefore all they that devour you shall be devoured;”

16, 17 *.*And all your adversaries, everyone of them, shall go into captivity; and they that spoil you shall be a spoil, and all that prey upon you will I give for a prey. For I will restore health unto you, and I will heal you of your wounds, says the LORD; because they called you an outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeks after. Did you notice that word, “therefore,” in the 16th verse? Can you see any, “therefore,” in it—any logical conclusion that could be drawn from the Prophet’s premises? The argument seems to be, “Because your disease is incurable, therefore will I restore health unto you. Because no one else can heal your wounds, therefore I will heal them.” It is a blessed thing to feel that you are incurable, for then it is that God will cure you! When there is an end of you, then you shall begin with God! But as long as you are full of self or sin, that passage shall be fulfilled to you, “He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent away empty.”

18, 19. Thus says the LORD; Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob’s tents, and have mercy on his dwelling places; and the city shall be built upon her own heap, and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof. And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the choice of them that make merry: and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small. Well might the Lord introduce such a promise as this with the word, “Behold”!

Again I remind you that these are the people who had their hands on their loins! These are they who were in sore trouble of soul! Yet now they are merry and full of gladness! And we, also, have learned to sing—

*My mourning He to dancing turns,  
For sackcloth, joy He gives,  
A moment, Lord, Your anger burns,  
But long your favor lives.*

20, 21. Their children also shall be as before, and their congregation shall be established before Me, and I will punish all that oppress them. And their nobles shall be of themselves, and their governor shall proceed from the midst of them; and I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto Me: for who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto Me? says the LORD. There is One, whom we call Master and Lord, who approaches the Throne of God on our behalf—One who fulfils that ancient Word of God, “I have exalted One chosen out of the people.” Our glorious Savior, through His humanity, is one of us and He appears before God on our behalf, blessed be His holy name!

22. And you shall be My people, and I will be your God. Happy are we if we can rejoice in this precious Truth of God!  
—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #1696 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE BIRD ESCAPED FROM THE SNARE  
NO. 1696

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

**“Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we are escaped.”  
Psalm 124:7.**

THIS text describes a soul-matter. The Psalmist is not speaking of a temporal deliverance, although, even in that sense, an escape from death would be a theme worthy of his sweetest song. He says, “Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers,” thus denoting a spiritual rescue. The man’s soul is the soul of the man and though some give all their attention to the body, their folly is great. It is as though a man should spend all his substance upon his house and have no bread for himself to eat. Do I speak to any who never think about their souls? Do you really believe that you will die like dogs and horses? I cannot believe that you have such brutal views of yourself! Believe me, you have within you an immortal spirit which will outlive the sun! If you have, up to now, been careless of your nobler part, may God’s Spirit teach you wisdom. I pray that you may so think of your soul that our text may become deeply interesting to you, so that you may join in its song of deliverance.

I have called the text a song—does it not read like one? “Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we are escaped.” It is a canticle of certainty. It does not say, “We hope that we have escaped and we trust that the snare is broken,” but, “The snare is broken, and we are escaped.” “Ifs,” and, “buts,” make no music! Poetry flees when chance enters! Certainties are melodies. We hear people speak of “dead certainties,” but the Christian rejoices in living certainties, and is wretched till they are his own! Rise then, my Beloved, above the fogs and mists which cover the marshes of carnal questioning! Climb the mountains of full assurance and stand there with your foreheads bathed in sunlight, breathing that serene atmosphere which is untainted by a cloud of doubt!

The text reads like a song, not only because of its certainty, but also because of its joy. It has the wing and the throat of a lark! Look how it rises from the net to God—“Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers.” Soon it takes another rise—“The snare is broken.” And it mounts yet, again, with still greater joy—“And we are escaped.” The words melt away into the music of Heaven as the spirit perfectly escapes from the snares of earth. The metaphor used in the text is simple, but yet beautiful and instructive. Pardon me if I make as much of it as I am able to do. First, we have here the bird. Secondly, the snare. Thirdly, the capture, and fourthly, the escape. We may then add a lesson from it all.

I. First, we have, here, the soul compared to A BIRD. It is a little bird, too—a sparrow, or one of the sparrow kind. “Our soul is escaped as a little bird”—not as a great bird that could break the net and free itself by its own force. A little bird fitly represents our soul when we are lowly in heart. In our unregenerate condition, we think ourselves eaglets, at the very least, but we are not great creatures, after all. We talk as great men, but we are all little in God’s sight. “Lord, what is man, that You are mindful of him?” Sparrows were very cheap in our Lord’s day because of their littleness—in the market you could buy two for a farthing and five for two farthings—so that they threw an odd bird in when you bought at such a wholesale rate as two farthings’ worth. Sparrows were inconsiderable things, “yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father.” If He cares for sparrows, be sure He cares for souls! And when you think least of yourself, yet believe that the Lord regards you.

Again, our soul is like a little bird because it is so ignorant. Birds know little about snares, yet they know so much that, “surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird.” Even this slender wisdom is more than men display, for they fly into the net when it is spread in their sight! Yes, into the same net out of which, in God’s Providence, they have just been permitted to escape! Man naturally is the essence of folly and he is desperately set on destroying himself. He must “see life,” he says and, therefore, he haunts the gates of death! He reckons the fowler to be his friend and dreams that he spreads his nets for purposes of friendly hospitality! He does not know that the fowler is hunting for his life and will destroy him if he can. So foolish are we and ignorant, we are as birds ready for the snare, till the Lord teaches us wisdom—and even then we need hourly keeping, or we are entrapped by the Destroyer.

Our soul is often like a little bird because it is so eager and venturesome. How birds will trust themselves in winter around traps of the simplest kind if but a few crumbs are used as bait! Alas, men are equally foolhardy—they see others perish, yet they follow their ways! Many sip of the intoxicating cup, yet declare they will never be drunks! They pilfer a little and yet they despise a thief! They indulge in wanton words, but vow to be chaste as snow! They go into questionable places of amusement, but hope to remain pure. Oh, silly birds! I mean silly

 souls! Thus the fowler fills his bags. Young people associate with ungodly persons and say, “We are not so weak-minded as to be led away by them”—thus displaying a weak mind by that boastful speech!

Youths tell us that to read skeptical books, impure novels and to hear lewd songs and spicy language will do them no harm. Believe no such flattering falsehoods, or you will rue the day! “You don’t catch old birds with chaff,” says the simpleton—and he hops into the net. “Younger birds must not come here,” he says, “it is dangerous for them, but I am safe enough.” Yet old birds’ necks are wrung as well as those of young birds—and experienced men are as foolish as the juveniles! When a man says, “It is no temptation to me,” it may be true, for soot will not blacken a sweep. Little birds, beware—the fowler promises pleasure, but the end thereof is death! The little bird, also, when once taken in the net, is a good comparison with the soul captured by sin, for it is defenseless. What can it do?

A mouse might eat the ropes and set free the lion, but no mouse will liberate the sparrow! He will have a short flutter and we shall hear no more of him. When a man is birdlimed by a vice, the more he flutters, the tighter he is held by it. What is more defenseless than a soul in the net of sin? What little power men seem to have against their habits! They boast that they can stop anywhere—but, alas, they stop nowhere! “Oh, I have only to come to a determination.” Yes, “only to come to a determination”— but to that determination you will not come! When men become entangled in the meshes of sin, their power to escape is gone. Jeremiah asks—“Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may you, also, do good, that are accustomed to do evil.” Such is the entanglement of habit, the slavery of lust.

While they are thus defenseless, we must notice, too, how alarmed they often are. The bird is no sooner in the net than he is frightened. Poor thing, how gladly would he escape if he could! Souls are not always so. They will be taken in Satan’s snares and yet they say that they are happy! Custom in sin kills conscience of sin. “A short life and a merry one,” they say, as if there could be any true merriment anywhere except in the great Father’s house where they begin to be merry, as if they had never been merry before. Many souls have enough of conscience and of enlightenment by the Word of God to alarm them when they find themselves entangled in sin. And then they beat about and hurt themselves, but, alas, notwithstanding all their efforts, unless a stronger hand than theirs shall break the net, they will perish by the fowler’s hand!

Our souls, once more, are like birds because they are the objects of snares. If the Pharisees would compass sea and land to make one proselyte, certainly Satan will compass all the universe to ruin a single soul, for he delights in destroying the souls of men. Nor is it Satan, only, for all the world seems to have taken to this fowling, and men who would not lift a finger to save their fellows will go far to ruin them! Oh, little birds, there is no place on earth safe for you till Jesus covers you with His protecting wings!

II. Secondly, we will now speak of THE SNARE. The text speaks twice of the snare. It is wonderful what a variety of snares there are for birds. The tombs of Egypt exhibit the art of bird catching and show us decoys, traps, nets and so forth. Such arts are still practiced by fowlers. The main point about the snare is that it is concealed. So, when the arch-fowler comes after the souls of men, he will not usually spread his net in their sight. Some silly birds can be taken in that way, but most souls need that the temptation should be veiled. Always suspect that in a temptation to sin there is more than you can see! Never say that it is a little thing, for great evil lurks in a little fault. Death and destruction hide under apparently small offenses.

Oh, if we could see everything as God sees it, then we poor silly souls might be in far less danger! But, alas, Satan covers the hook with a tempting bait and we are taken! Snares and traps are usually attractive. The poor bird sees seeds which he is fond of and he goes for them, little judging that he is to give his life in exchange for brief enjoyment. So is it with Satan. He tempts us with pleasures, with the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life—we taste the sweet and are pierced with the smart. Did we perceive the intent of the great enemy of souls, we should fly from sin! You know the old adage, “Fear the Greeks, even when they bring gifts”—even so, fear a temptation to sin, even should it offer you all the kingdoms of this world! May God keep us from the attractions which conceal the snare!

But Satan’s snares, like the fowler’s, are sadly effectual. Look at the quantities of small birds that will be found for sale in the markets— fowlers must be exceedingly skillful to catch all these. If we could walk through Satan’s market, what a multitude of souls should we see in his bands! Multitudes upon multitudes are the victims of their own passions, victims of that hellish art which makes evil appear to be good! God save us from being taken in these most deadly snares! What are these snares? I cannot mention them all, for they are legion. Snares tuck our bed and snares attend our board. Snares are in the street and snares are in the field. Snares are on the table and snares are in our daily walk.

But the chief among them are temptations to sin. The Evil One endeavors to lead us into a false way which will be congenial to our taste. We each have a peculiar weakness and he knows how to adapt himself to it. He has been a student of human nature for so long a time that he knows more about man than man knows about himself and he, therefore, chooses that bait which is most likely to attract us. Oh that we may have Grace to keep clear of pleasurable sin! The rabbis said to the Nazarite who was not to drink wine or strong drink, “O Nazarite, go about, go about— and do not pass through a vineyard.” So, child of God, it will be well for you to go about and not enter into temptation. Your Master bids you pray, “Lead us not into temptation.” Against temptation we are to watch and pray as well as against the sin that is likely to come of it.

Another snare is erroneous doctrine. There is plenty of that abroad at this time. Be warned! You can have high doctrine and doctrine low; broad doctrine and narrow doctrine. You can have it how you like, for nowadays every man makes his own gospel and sits in judgment upon the Word of God! Dearly Beloved, hold fast the Truth of God, and be not decoyed by error! If any come with a new gospel, turn your ears away from their deceptive teaching, for false doctrine is the poison of asps and the venom of Hell lies within them. Even Christian people are in danger from another snare, namely, deceitful action. The Tempter whispers, “You need not do evil, but there are different ways of judging right and wrong—and it is best to go by the custom of the trade!”

Satan puts things very prettily when he means to ruin us. You have somebody else’s money entrusted to you. Of course, you would not steal it—but yon can use it for a little while—and then replace it. It is true, if it should be lost, people will call you a thief, but then you are not going to lose it! You are going to double it by your cleverness! That is the snare! At other times the temptation is in this form—“Be sure to buy the thing if you would like it, though you have no money with which to pay for it.” You would not steal. No, no! There is another way of doing it. Buy it, and do not pay for it. This is one of the snares with which Satan seduces men till they are ruined. Ah, me, that men should be so moved from their integrity! Oh, child of God, be upright in everything! However well you may gloss a matter over, and however much others may excuse it, yet if a certain act would be wrong in the sight of God, you must not think of it!

I have noticed another snare. Satan tries to get Christian people to ignore the experience of others. A certain good man is often melancholy. “Ah,” says Satan, “that is how you ought to be—you ought to be bowed down with holy sorrow.” I remember right well, when I was a youth, hearing a preacher say that it was dangerous to be sure of our salvation! He preached up the duty, beauty and sweetness of being everlastingly in doubt as to your condition! A few people would gather around such a preacher and sit and have a little comfortable misery all to themselves— and think that they were worshipping God! Now, that is a snare to a Christian because he has a right to be glad and, “the joy of the Lord is our strength.” May we be kept out of that snare!

On the other hand, anxious people see Christians who are advanced in Grace and full of faith while they, themselves, are much cast down—then the Evil One whispers, “You are not like those good men! You are no Christian.” Brother, you cannot have another man’s experience any more than you can wear another man’s face! Certain lovely ferns grow best in the shade and never flourish in the sun, while many flowers cannot have too much sunlight. Do not wish to be like this man or that man, but pray God to make you like Jesus Christ—and to let your experience glorify His blessed name! Otherwise, the desire to copy others will be a snare to you. Thus I might go on mentioning snares. They are, some of them, gross and carnal. But for the spiritual, there are snares so neat and pretty that they are apt to be taken in them before they are aware!

According to Pliny, the nets in which the Egyptians took little birds were frequently so fine that one person could carry a net large enough to encompass a whole tree. Surely, it must have been a small tree, but even then, it is a remarkable statement for so reliable a writer to have made. We may here see an illustration of the delicacy of those temptations with which Satan surrounds the nobler order of minds. Strong as iron, yet filmy as gauze, are the snares for spiritual men. Why, Satan can encompass a whole Church with one of those nets and you scarcely know that it is there! And yet the minds within its meshes are quite unable to mount up and sing unto their Lord, as once they did, for they are within an invisible net.

III. We cannot further dwell on the subject of the snare, but we must turn to consider THE CAPTURE. Birds are taken in nets and souls are taken by temptations to sin, by errors of doctrine and by a thousand other methods. Dear Friends, it is a dreadful thing for the poor little bird, when it is taken, especially when it is so anxious to escape that it hurts itself in its efforts to get free. How came it to be taken? It may have been taken through hunger. Half-starved, it dashed into peril for necessary food. Many true men are in such straits and difficulties that they are sadly liable to be brought into the net.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, pray God to deliver you from poverty and from great riches, for there are perilous snares about each of those positions. May you be neither exalted nor depressed, but preserved in the middle path of experience. If you are extremely needy, you may be tempted to do wrong to provide for your wife and family. I pray that you may never yield to the temptation, but trust in God and He will deliver you without your putting forth your hands unto iniquity. Other birds are taken merely by their appetite. They are not excessively hungry, but they enjoy certain choice seeds and the fowler knows it—and he scatters such around the trap. Ease of body, indulgence of taste, the joy of being admired, the sweets of power and position—all these and many more have been the fowler’s baits.

Hundreds have all that heart ought to wish for, but they desire to be rich and, therefore, fall into a thousand snares which they might have avoided. Men are snared by eating and by drinking; by fine raiment and by vainglorious display. Snares lie thickly around the appetites of the body and the longings of the mind. Some persons are entrapped by fear. Birds have rushed into the net for fear of danger—many persons have become great offenders against God through lack of moral courage. They are afraid of the laughter of fools! They cannot bear the sarcasm of the socalled wise—and so they suppress the Truth of God and join in sin to escape scorn. God give us a holy bravery with which to defy every man’s opinion when we know that we are obeying the Lord!

Some little birds are lost by love of company. The fowler has a decoy which sings sweetly or chirps pleasantly and the other birds must follow it. In the Church of God we lose many members by ungodly marriages. The worldling pipes his pretty note and the tender heart is taken by it. The fair enthusiast says, “I shall convert him,” but it is very, very seldom that this happens—it is usually the other way! This is a snare of Satan in which many are taken. Thus you see how souls are captured. Perhaps I am speaking to one here who has flown into the net. You do not know what to do, Friend, for you are quite helpless to break your bonds. You went in very eagerly and, oh, how eagerly you would get out, again, if you could! But you cannot escape. Your own helplessness is now apparent as it never was before.

One thing, however, you can do—you can cry to One who is stronger than you! You can pray the Lord to pluck your feet out of the net—and He is able to do it, for all things are possible with Him!

IV. Just a word or two upon THE ESCAPE. This is a very blessed text, although the sermon has been gloomy so far, for now we shall see the fowler disappointed and the captive let loose! I wish that everybody here could repeat the utterance and cry, “Our soul is escaped. We were in the net, but our soul has escaped. The snare is broken! It has no power over us any longer. We are free from its grasp! We have escaped! Up, up, we soar away from the fowler and his nets. Glory be to God, we have escaped!—

*“As when the fowler’s snare is broke,  
The bird escapes on cheerful wings  
My soul, set free from Satan’s yoke,  
With joy bursts forth, and mounts, and sings.”*

This escape is due to God, alone! As the bird could not get out of the snare, so the soul cannot escape from temptation, but God can bring it out, and He works the rescue. Hear this, you that are slaves to drunkenness—God can deliver you! You that have fallen into licentiousness—hear it—God can deliver you! Whatever the sin that has birdlimed you, those gracious hands which once were nailed to the Cross can set you free! Up, up, up, you that pine on the borders of despair! Jesus can deliver you! He that made the world out of nothing can make a joyful Christian even out of you! He can turn your mourning into dancing and your despair into confidence.

This escape is achieved by power. That word, “broken,” has force in it. “The snare is broken”—the meshes torn with a strong hand; the steel trap dashed in pieces! It matters not what danger you are in, there is power enough in God to fetch you out of it! I thought, once, that God could never save me. I supposed that He would bless my brother and my sisters, but that He would leave me—yet He did save me, blessed be His name! And you, too, He is able to deliver. “Oh, but I am the odd man,” cries one! Then there are two of us! And if God has saved one odd man, He can surely save another—and why should He not save you, in spite of all your eccentricity? “But I do not think that He will save me.” What are your thoughts worth? He can save even you! Only trust Him, though you are in the net, and out of that net you shall be fetched, for He leaves no soul to perish that puts its trust in Him!

Observe that the escape was complete—“the snare is broken, and we are escaped.” As long as a little bird has the tiniest bit of cotton tied to its leg, and that is fastened anywhere, the bird has not escaped. And as long as you have one evil habit—one wrong thing that you really love—you have not escaped! You must be altogether separated from your sins. No man can be married to Christ till he is divorced from sin. Our deliverance must be complete, or it is not true. Who can give us this but the Lord Jesus Christ by His blessed Spirit? Trust Him to set you free and no net shall hold you! I would again put the question, “How many of us can say, ‘We have escaped?’” Let us sing unto the Lord if we can—and let those who cannot say that they are free, continue to plead earnestly with God that He would deliver them.

V. I would close with THE LESSON which this subject ought to teach us. A word or two only. It ought to teach us, first, to sing, for if a bird gets out of the net, does it not sing? How glad it seems to be when once it flies away! Oh, you that have been delivered from sin and Satan, sing unto the Lord! Praise and bless His name! Be as happy as possible. Be something more than full of happiness! How can that be? Why, be so full of it that it overflows and cheers others. Let us communicate our joy as far as we can, for we are escaped. We are escaped and we will praise the blessed God who broke the snare.

Next, let us trust, for if the Lord has saved us from the dreadful snare of sin and Satan, He will save us from everything else. It is sad, to me, that any should trust the Lord with their souls and yet they cannot trust Him for their daily bread, or for help in their daily trials! This must not be! If the Lord has given our soul so great an escape, depend upon it, He will take care of our bodies. He that gave us Jesus will give us food and raiment and let us be content. Lastly, let us watch. If we have fallen into the snare, once, let us keep our eyes open not to go there again. May the Holy Spirit prevent any child of God from turning aside, even for a moment, from the straight way. “Let them not turn again to folly,” is one of God’s own cautions to His people. He has brought you up out of the horrible Pit—do not play near the edge of it. He has set your feet on a rock—what have you to do with the miry clay? Get away from the slippery ground and let your goings be established on the rock.

I would say, again, to you netted ones—you that are really caught in the trap and held fast—oh, that the Lord would come at once and set you free! I think He will, yes, I am sure that He will if you cry to Him to do so. I have heard of a sailor who had been in prison, that after his release, he had money in his pocket and, going over London Bridge, he saw a man selling birds—thrashes, larks and so on. “What do you want for the lot?” said Jack. I forget how much it was, but Jack found the money and, as soon as the birds were his, he opened the door and let them all fly away. The man called out “Whatever did you buy those birds for, and then let them out?” “Oh,” said the sailor, “if you had been in prison as I have been, you would be sure to set everything free you could get a hold of.”

You and I ought to display the same kind of feeling towards all poor ensnared souls. I am sure that the Lord Jesus Christ is more tender-hearted than we are and, therefore, He will certainly come and set free all prisoners who beg Him to open their cage doors! He is the great Emancipator— show Him your bonds and beg for liberty—and He will set you free!

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1450 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE IMMOVABILITY OF THE BELIEVER  
NO. 1450

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 22, 1878, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever.”  
Psalm 125:1.**

THIS is the first verse of one of the Songs of degrees. These Songs were probably sung by the pilgrims as they went up to Jerusalem, when they halted at the various stations or passed certain places of interest. It is very possible that this Psalm burst forth from joyful lips at the moment when Zion first came into sight and the worshippers gazed upon the city of their solemnities. Happy pilgrims! They had left behind them many a dreary glen and dangerous wood and now they saw in their full view their journey’s end and, therefore, they sang with all the gathered joy of days gone by. They could not have so exulted if they had not previously sorrowed. The same truth may be learned from the use of the term, “Song of degrees”—it warns us that this Psalm rises out of that which preceded it, as one step of a staircase rises above its fellow.

David had not sung the 125th Psalm if he had not first learned to sing the one hundred and twenty-fourth. If he had not been where men threatened to swallow him up quickly and found in such a case that the Lord was on his side, he could not have been quite so sure that, “they that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed.” Our experiences are our instructors even concerning themselves—they shed light upon each other and we learn enough from one trial to begin to unfold the mysteries of another. The 124th Psalm must first, to some extent, be passed through so that we see that all our help lies in the Lord, or we shall never reach to the grand positiveness of this 125th and sing, “They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion.”

We have heard some of the brave expressions of Christian heroes and we have thought, “I wish I could speak with that man’s faith.” Brothers and Sisters, to possess such faith you must take with it, its owner’s trials! You may rest assured that God never gave a penny’s worth of faith to any man that it might be hoarded in a cupboard—faith is sure to be used and what is more, great faith is not possessed by those who are untrained in its need and use. It is a sword which is not girt upon a man till he has come to years and strength to use it.

I do greatly joy in that utterance of Luther when going to Worms. Some of his friends told him that he would be burned to powder, as Huss had been before him, but he laughed and said he had no fear. “If,” said he, “they shall build a fire between Wittenberg and Worms that should reach to Heaven, in the Lord’s name I would appear and step into behemoth’s mouth, between his great teeth and confess Christ and let him do his pleasure.” His joy at that time seems to have been overflowing, though

his danger was manifest to all.

Now, this holy boasting sounds well, but it is not to be imitated by every baby in Grace—this man had passed through a preparatory process which brought his mind into a triumphant state, in which he was a king of men, a lion among a pack of dogs! It is not to be forgotten that there was a subsequent sinking of his soul, as in the case of Elijah, to prevent his being exalted above measure at the recollection of his own courage. For this, also, he who would have a right royal faith must stand prepared. They that do business in great waters must sail in ships fitted for stormy seas. You and I, perhaps, paddle around the shores of a quiet lake where our little boat is large enough for most purposes. We are not tested by great storms, neither is our boat held by great anchors. Our needs are not of the greatest and, therefore, our supplies are not like those of the larger craft which sail upon greater waters.

Still, one would wish to be among the Lord’s most useful servants and to that end would cheerfully accept the great risk. We would not wish to remain babies, but we desire to become full-grown men and surely David is one who has drank up the 124th Psalm as a somewhat bitter cup and then feels that he can dine upon the 125th and rise to bless the Lord who makes His people to “be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever.” Note that the metaphor which is used in the text was drawn by the pilgrims from the hill before them, or, if the Psalm does not belong to pilgrims, to all Israel. They took the comparison from that mountain with which they were best acquainted.

If they might not all see Lebanon, which lay at the northern extremity of the land—if they might not all behold the excellency of Carmel, or gaze upon the heights of Hermon—yet once in the year they must all look upon Zion, “where the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel.” The emblem was, therefore, a familiar one and I wish, sometimes, that we were more apt at sanctifying to holy uses the common objects which are round about us—these streets and houses, our own country and our own home. I am afraid our eyes are open when we seek emblems of sadness and we find them on every hedge and in any garden-plot—but we should also look at home when we need metaphors of thanksgiving with which to set forth our security and our comfort in the Lord.

To have a house at all is something. Cold blows the wind, but warm is our own fireside. And even so, “Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.” All you who love your homes may see in them the figure and representation of your dwelling in God in peace forever. Believing Englishmen, you may especially bless God that your country gives you an admirable picture of your own security! You dwell alone, separated by the floods from all other nations—this is the security of our beloved isle—

*“He bade the ocean round you flow,*

*Not bars of brass could guard you so.”*  
They that trust in the Lord shall be as these happy islands which shall not know the rod of the oppressor, for the Lord has guarded them with a better defense than walls or bulwarks. Hebrew comparisons were most fit for Hebrew believers—let us make English figures out of our own circumstances and surroundings—thus will it appear as if our faith were less a tradition and more truly a present-day reality!

Thus, also, will true religion wear a more real and homely aspect and will strike others with greater force. Faith, when she is active and observant, finds illustrations of her own blessedness all around. Amid the descending snows of this cheerless wintry day, she says, “Did He not say that cold and heat and summer and winter should never cease?” Have we not His Covenant with the earth still fulfilled before our eyes and may we not rest certain, therefore, that the Covenant with His people will not fail? Are not these snowflakes tokens of His Word which comes not forth in vain? Does not this bitter chill assure us of His Omnipotence of whom we read, “He casts forth His ice like morsels: who can stand before His cold?” Open your eyes, my Brothers and Sisters, and look about and as the believing Israelite saw Zion and began to sing about it, so shall you, also, “go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing.”

Now, to come to the text—I have merely touched its angles in this rough preface. We have in the verse before us, first of all, a lowly people—“They that trust in the Lord.” One talks a good deal about them, yet they are of no reputation among men. Secondly, a singular stability in them—“they shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever.” And then, thirdly, we shall for a while consider the evident reason for this stability of theirs.

I. First, here we read of A LOWLY PEOPLE. That which is said of them is nothing very great in the judgment of human reason—they are merely said to “trust in the Lord.” This is a very simple thing to do. God gives promises and they believe them. God is at work in Providence and they trust Him. God invites them to the Mercy Seat and they approach it. God gives them His Son as their salvation and they believe in Him. God grants His Holy Spirit as their teacher and they learn of Him and obey Him. To sum up all in one, they “trust in the Lord.”

“That is a small matter,” cries one, “any fool can do that!” Just so. Perhaps more would do so if the most of men were not foolishly wise. Any child can trust and more would trust in the Lord if more men were childlike. “Trust in the Lord.” It needs no effort of intellect to trust and it needs no laborious education to learn the way. Trusting in the Lord is simply depending where there is unquestionable reason for reliance, believing what is assuredly true and acting upon it. Trusting in the Lord is taking at His Word, One who cannot lie, or change, or fail. And certainly this is no great feat if we look at it from the carnal man’s own point of view.

These trusters in the Lord cannot plume themselves upon the feat they have performed, for to trust in the Lord would naturally seem to be one of the commonplaces of human thought. Should not a being trust its Creator? Strange that any creature should think it difficult! It is a sure sign of the depravity of our race that we not only think it difficult, but find it so! It is a sure evidence of how much Satan has bewitched the human mind that simple faith has even become impossible to unrenewed hearts, though it is, in itself, the easiest exercise of the mind. Men cannot even

understand what trusting in the Lord means till God, the Holy Spirit, opens their understandings—and then He must both beget and nourish their faith or they will have none of it!

To trust in the Lord we have admitted to be a very simple matter, but at the same time it is very right, is it not? Poor simpletons that we are, we can even appeal to the wise ones of the earth and let them be judges in this matter. Should not a man trust in his own Creator? Is it possible for us to discover a being more worthy of confidence than our own God? Does He not deserve to be trusted? In what one respect has He ever played us false? Is there a single instance in which the Word of the Lord, once given, has been found to fail? When have thirsty mouths resorted to this Fountain and found it dry? If there is anything against the veracity of God, let us hear it. Evidence is invited! The Lord Himself bids any testify against Him who have anything to declare.

Lo, these thousands of years have rolled along and Jehovah has challenged men to bring forth their strong arguments against Him if they could, but they have found no cause why He should be distrusted and His Word dishonored. If, then, there is new evidence, O unbelievers, you are here to declare it! Let us hear it. There is none! You know that there is none! Surely it is a matter of clear honesty and right to any man to trust Him till He has deceived us or afforded us cause for suspicion. We always say we will trust the bridge that has carried us safely over. Has not the Lord been faithful to those who have trusted Him?

What say the trusters of former times, or of this present? Lives there one who will come forward and say, “I have trusted in the Lord and have been confounded. I have stayed myself upon the Eternal and I have found Him false”? No, Hell itself contains not one adversary of God who dares to utter such a calumny against His Divine faithfulness! Well, Brothers and Sisters, if we are told that our trust is simple, we will be reconciled to the statement by the equally manifest fact that it is right. Moreover, is it not wise? What can be wiser? Those of us who have tried trusting in God have never found Him fail, whereas when we have trusted in men we have been disappointed! You who have been self-reliant must have found selfreliance to be, at certain times, a terrible mistake! But those who are Godreliant have never found an instance in which their rest in the Lord has been a questionable policy.

Would it not be an awfully grand fact if a man should make a failure of his life and could then turn round and truly say, “Oh God, the cause of my failure was that I trusted alone in You and You could not, or would not help me”? As there is a terrible grandeur in the infamous wickedness of Milton’s Satan, so much of grandeur that sometimes the reader has been made forgetful of the vileness of the fiend in the greatness of the rebel, so there would be a sort of appalling splendor about a being who should have implicitly lived to God, depended upon Him and then should have failed. The idea is next door to blasphemous and tremblingly I let it pass before you that you may perceive that it can have no real existence! Borrowing a poetic license, I have shadowed it, but I know it to be utterly impossible.

See, then, how certain of success is the Believer! How impossible it is that he should make shipwreck! The mere notion of it has passed before you and you have rejected it as worse than absurd. It must be wise to link yourself to Him whose name is Love. To get that little boat of yours in tow with the Infinite must be wise! To gain some kind of connection between yourself, the creature of an hour, and the Eternal who spoke the world into existence and whose glance will return it to nothing must be wise! It must be a grandly wise thing to be joined unto the Lord God and there is no link that can, at first, be cast between God and sinful man but that of simple confidence—be that link ours at this moment and forever!

Blessed are they that by the Holy Spirit have been led to trust in God through our Lord Jesus Christ! Let us speak further about these simple people—these half fools, as the world thinks them to be. They came to trust in God as a matter of necessity, they could not do otherwise. Why is it that numbers of people deal with their friends on trust? It is because no other way is open to them. Matthew Henry says, “All that deal with God must deal upon trust and He will give comfort to those only that give credit to Him.” We cannot bring the Lord our merits, but let us give Him our confidence. Because we are poor, let us appeal to His riches! Because we cannot help ourselves, let us cast ourselves upon His power!

What else can we do? God is to be trusted—let us trust Him with all our hearts. Do other trusts invite us? Let us reject them, for we remember the past heartbreaks which they have caused us. Lord, we trust in You and come to cast ourselves upon You! To whom else can we go? You have the words of eternal life! Oftentimes trust is, to a Believer, his only path, he is shut up to faith—he must believe or die. He is pushed into a corner; he is bewildered; he can scarcely pray; he cannot comprehend himself, nor lift a finger. And then trusting is the resort of his desperation—it is not his choice, but the fruit of compulsion.

Brethren, I feel it a sweet thing to faint away into faith! Did you ever do that? Were you ever so far gone that at last you have melted right away from yourself and sunk into God? I believe that this swooning faintness is the door of faith to multitudes of souls! They enter into peace, not by strength, but by sheer weakness! They do not run into the arms of God, but they fall there! There are doubtless some who run to Christ, for we read of one who came running to Him, but there are others who must be dropped down before Him upon a bed. It matters not how they come to Jesus, so long as they come to Him! Yet it is worthy of note that faith, in many cases, is a child of weakness.

On its human side it is a Jabez, borne with sorrow, the birth of self’s expiring pang. Yet faith which thus arises out of very weakness, like the phoenix from its own ashes, has a great side to it. It is, in some respects, the most sublime effort of the human mind. If ever the bright spirits which stand before the Truth of God test their own faculties upon the mysteries of Providence, foreknowledge, predestination and the free will of man—if they ever enquire where the agency of the created ends and where the Divine is found—if ever, I say, they try the edge of their intellect upon

themes like these, they make an end by declaring, “We are lost! Our spirits cannot comprehend the infinite, but we believe in God and are sure that He orders all things aright.” They doff their coronets before the Throne of their superior King in reverent confidence in His eternal goodness—this is their grandest worship, their truest adoration—they believe!

Brothers and Sisters, faith is not of earth alone, but saints and angels in Heaven believe in the Eternal God! It were a crime to suspect them of the contrary. The mystery of Jehovah’s dealings still manifests their faith—they remember His unfulfilled promises and they look for their accomplishment—for they have not as yet seen the Bridegroom coming to His bride, nor the earth subdued unto His sway, nor the full manifestation of the creation when the sons of God shall be revealed and the creature, itself, shall cease from its groaning. Trust is the simplicity of a baby, but it is the glory of a genius! It is grand in seraph or in saint—and while it befits a child, it is worthy of an archangel! Poor fools are these trusters, yet they are near akin to nobler beings!

Now, can you tell me why is it that if a man trusts in God he is generally despised by his fellows? If a person were to say, “As for my getting on in the world, I am trusting to a friend of mine who is influential with the government,” or if another said, “My father was born before me and he will see me provided for,” nobody would condemn either of such persons as an idiot, but would treat his confidence as quite legitimate! But if any one of us were to say, “Our confidence, as for our future in this world is resting in our heavenly Father,” there would be a shrugging of the shoulders, a knowing look of the eyes and when they got far enough away, our critics would say, “That man is a fool, or a cant!” Alas, God is nobody to the bulk of mankind and it seems a ridiculous thing to them to trust in Him!

To trust in God is to the worldly man the next thing to building castles in the air! The unbelieving laugh because they cannot understand us—but what is the reason they become angry with us? Why do they turn, again, and rend us? Other simpletons they let alone, but those who trust in God become objects of scorn! The Believer finds that a jest is made upon his faith and mirth is excited by his confidence! What he says is widely laughed at and more than a little distorted—and he is looked upon as little better than a natural fool! This was always so and always will be so till the Lord comes. He that is born after the flesh persecutes him that is born after the Spirit! The man who walks by sight cannot understand the man who walks by faith—how could he? And if we get to trust in God and that trust becomes the great motive power of our life, as I earnestly hope it may be with each one of us, then the worldly man will not know how to make heads or tails of our conduct and he will, first of all, ridicule and then oppose. Care nothing for the opposition—he who is right has conquered!

Before we proceed further, let us notice how the text includes all who truly trust in the Lord, both small and great, for it says, “They that trust in the Lord.” It does not say, “They that trust in the Lord with a highly intelligent faith.” It is a good thing to understand much and to trust in the Lord with growing knowledge, but, dear Soul, if you do not know much, yet if you are trusting in the Lord, you shall be as Mount Zion which cannot be removed! The text does not limit the blessing to only those who have great faith. The stronger your faith the better—the more faith you can have the richer and happier your life will be—but the assurance of our text is for those who have any faith, even a mustard seed of faith! They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion.

And note it does not say, “those who have had faith for many years.” It is a great thing to have had faith for a long time—it ripens and sweetens— but this promise is made to the youngest as well as to the oldest; to those who have believed in the Master’s Word for a few years, or months, or days, as well as to the veterans. They that trust in the Lord, though it was only yesterday that they began to trust, shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed! Neither does the text demand a loftiness and heroism of trust—it simply speaks of the trust itself. Your faith may not be like that of Samson, which slays a thousand men, but it may be a humble, teachable faith, which sits like Mary at the Master’s feet at home. Well, you shall be as Mount Zion that cannot be removed. Only have real trust in God and you shall have the steadfastness of the sacred hill of the Lord.

Some of you may have been so sweetly taught to trust in the Lord that you can say, “Yes, blessed be His name, I do trust Him, altogether, unreservedly and without a suspicion.” Be you abundantly sure that the text is your portion this day! I hope there are some of us who can now trust our Lord in any case. If we do but see the Lord’s Word in any teaching, however mysterious or obnoxious to flesh and blood, our questions are at an end. We accept unhesitatingly the hard and the deep things of God. If we see any attribute, or promise, or half a promise of our Lord to be on our side, we feel more than safe.

A good old saint who lately lay dying told her pastor that she was resting upon the justice of God. The good pastor thought that she had chosen a strange point of the Divine Character to rest on, but it was not at all so, for she explained herself. “I rest in His justice to my great Surety and Substitute, that He would not let Him die for me in vain.” Thus hard, stern Justice becomes a blessed pillow for our confidence and none can be softer for a dying head! Though Justice is as a stone, yet he that can use it as Jacob used the stone at Bethel shall see the ladder which reached to Heaven and angels trooping upon its rungs! Awkward Providences, too, like stern attributes, we have learned to use for helps in our trusting. It happened that Rabbi Joshua was walking up Mount Zion one day with his brother, Rabbi Eliezer, and as they walked along they startled a fox, which ran out from among the rubbish.

“Alas, my Brother,” said Joshua, “this is a sad sign. Does it not show us the anger of the Lord against Israel? He has given Zion to be a desolation and the foxes walk about her.” Eliezer replied, “True, my Brother, but does it not also prove the faithfulness of Jehovah towards Zion, for inasmuch as He said that the foxes should go about her when she sinned, has He not also said that He will build her walls again? If He is thus faithful to His threats, will He not, in due time, fulfill His promises?”

Brothers and Sisters, you must trust the Lord wholly and entirely in everything and concerning everything. “Trust in Him at all times.” You must trust the dark side of Him. You must trust in the shadow of His wings as well as in the light of His Countenance. Some of you have only learned to trust to the smile of His face—you must learn to trust in the blows of His fists. God bring us to that! “No,” you say, “we can never come to that!” Surely we can, for did not one of old say, “Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him”? That is precisely what we mean!

II. Under our second head we shall consider the grand privilege of the text, THE SECURITY OF BELIEVERS—“They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abides forever.” Mount Zion had, in David’s day, undergone a great many changes and it has seen many more since, but it has never been removed. There it was when the Jebusite defied David; there it was when Araunah threshed his wheat; there it was when the Temple gleamed in the sun; there it was when the Roman soldier cast the firebrand into the holy place and it is there now— it has never been removed and it never will be!

God’s children undergo a variety of experiences. Today their hearts are a place of sacrifice and tomorrow a battlefield. By turns their soul is a temple and a threshing floor—but whatever their ups and downs may be, they shall never be removed from their ordained and appointed place—by the Grace of God they are where they are and where they shall be. They shall never be effectually removed from that place before the Lord in which infinite love has fixed them. Where, then, are Believers? We answer first, they are in the place of justification. As soon as they believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, they were justified by faith. How many years have passed since then? Never mind—“there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.”

They have not fallen into the place of condemnation—they have not been driven from the honorable position of justified men, for, “the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” The Lord has covered them with the righteousness of Christ and cast all their sins into the depths of the sea and, therefore, they must and they shall stand in His favor as long as Zion’s famous rock abides in its place. “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” The sheep of Christ shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of His hands! The Believer is also in the place of regeneration and out of that condition he shall never be removed. He was born again—prove that fact and there is no reversing it! He that is born again is born again. You cannot take from a man his first birth and neither can you take from a man his second birth—the thought is ridiculous, the fact is impossible!

Are you a child of God? You are a child of God and you can never be other than a child of God, either in time or in eternity. Have you a child? You may disown him, but he is yours none the less. Your child may be rebellious and his character may make you sorrowful, but he is your child for all that. You cannot “unchild” him. Even so, if God is my Father, which I know He is, since He has taught me to trust in Him, then I may not question the perpetuity of my sonship since it is an abiding thing and I shall no more be removed from it than Mount Zion from its ancient seat! Where is the Believer? He is in the place of the gracious purpose—“for whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son.”

Being called, my Brothers and Sisters, you are a Believer, for that is the mark of the heavenly calling! Therefore you can be sure that you were foreknown and predestinated, and you can be equally certain that from this predestination you shall no more be removed than the mountains shall be torn from their sockets and thrown into the depths of the sea! You are also in the place of Divine Love, dear to the heart of God, for the Father Himself loves you and nothing shall make Him cease to love you! He did not love you because of anything good in you—when He chose you He knew what you would be—you will never surprise Him, whatever evil you fall into, for He has foreseen and provided for it all. And He has said, “I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you; for the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall the Covenant of My peace be removed, says the Lord that has mercy on you.”

Beloved, if you are, indeed, trusting in God, you are in the stronghold of the Covenant—God has entered into bonds with you to bless you! By oath and promise, by two immutable things in which it is impossible for Him to lie, He has given you strong consolation concerning everlasting salvation in Christ Jesus and you are like Mount Zion—you shall never be removed from your place in the Covenant. Although your house is not so with God as you might desire, yet has He made with you an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure. What is your position? Why, you are in Christ! You are one with your Lord and Head, a living member of His body! You are a part of the mystical Christ and none shall dismember the Only-Begotten or rend in pieces the Lord of All! It can never be that He shall lose a single limb of His own august body!

Till Mount Zion shall be torn from its eternal base none who are in Christ shall ever be torn away from Him! In this Truth of God there is something to feed upon. Here is a downy couch of precious consolation to lie upon when you are sick—and a garden of delights to walk in when health returns. Here is meat for men in the strength of which we may do and dare and die for our Lord! “They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which can never be removed, but which abides forever.” This shall not only be a matter of fact as to the Believer’s actual position with God, but, to a large extent, this shall be true in his own consciousness as he advances in the life and walk of faith.

Believers are too often tossed about in their minds and suffer great shakings and moving of heart because they do not trust in the Lord as they should. These things ought not to be, for we ought to be steadfast and immovable. But by reason of infirmity and immaturity many are tossed to and fro as in a tempest. Still, even in these, deep in their soul their faith is earnestly keeping its hold and does not permit them altogether to drift. At the back of a great deal of grievous unbelief, when we are in a depressed condition, there lives a faith which is not moved, but

in secret takes hold as for dear life, biding its time till better days shall come.

I remember another story of Martin Luther which may fitly be told in this place. Great-souled Martin Luther could believe and doubt as much any man of his time! In believing he could excel the angels and in horrible thoughts of doubting he could almost match the devils! Great-hearted men are subject to horrible fits of faintness and despair unknown to minds of smaller caliber. One day he fell so low in spirit that his friends were frightened at what he might say or do. Things were going ill with the great cause and the Reformer might, in his dreadful condition, have upset everything. So his friends got him out of the way, saying to themselves, “The man must be alone. His brain is over-worked. He must be quiet.”

He rested a bit, and came back, looking as sour and gloomy as ever. Rest and seclusion had not stilled the winds nor lulled the waves! Luther was still in a storm and judged that the good cause was shipwrecked. I will now give you my own version of the method adopted for the great man’s cure. He went home, but when he came to the door nobody welcomed him. He entered their best room and there sat Catherine, his wife, all dressed in black, weeping as from a death in the house. By her side lay a mourning cloak, such as ladies wear at funerals. “Ah,” says he, “Kate, what is the matter? Is the child dead?” She shook her head and said the little ones were alive, but something much worse than that had happened. Luther cried “Oh, what has befallen us? Tell me quick! I am sad enough as it is. Tell me quick!”

“Good man,” said she, “have you not heard? Is it possible that the terrible news has not reached you?” This made the Reformer the more inquisitive and ardent and he pressed to be immediately told of the cause of sorrow. “Why,” said Kate, “have you not been told that our heavenly Father is dead and His cause in the world is therefore overturned?” Martin stood and looked at her, and at last burst into such a laugh that he could not possibly contain himself, but cried, “Kate, I read your riddle—what a fool I am! God is not dead, He always lives, but I have acted as if He were! You have taught me a good lesson.”

It is only by realizing the everlasting abiding love of God that they that trust in the Lord shall come to feel steadfast as Mount Zion which shall never be removed. The man of God may know that he is safe and yet there may be such a rush and tumult in his experience that he may not be able to understand himself or realize his true position. This may happen even to more advanced Christians. But as we grow in Divine Grace, the tendency is to reach a more even and equable condition. Experienced Believers are not to be put about by every puff of wind. No, they come, at last, to hold on their way in the teeth of all ill weathers and, like hardy mariners, make small account of the lesser storms of life. It is grand to gaze into the face of a Patriarch who wears written on his placid brow the words, “He shall not be moved forever. His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.”

Such men are the pillars of society and help poor trembling, doubting hearts to hope that there is yet something stable. Let it be our objective and desire to grow into such confirmed and established Believers. The promise of God deserves unwavering faith and why should we not render it and thus become fixed in our repose of soul? Once more, while it is delightful to consider the actual immovability of the Believer and most profitable to seek after a growing establishment of faith, there is one point of which we have already and can never allow a question to be raised about. As to the Gospel which we believe and teach, we are once and for all fixed and settled about it—our creed is not a variable quantity, or a shifting cloud. We know whom we have believed and are as fixed as Mount Zion as to the eternal verities upon which our hopes are built.

Since we have trusted in the Lord we have, at times, felt that we did not just then derive the support and the comfort that we expected from it, but what then? Shall we leave it and look elsewhere? God forbid! We are at a pass with all the world of doubters, thinkers, philosophizers and scientific dreamers! We know enough of the Truth of the Gospel to be resolved to hold it against legions of their order! We defy, alike, the council of infidels and the Hell of devils—we never will depart from the grand old Gospel which we have received! No, my Brothers and Sisters, at the very worst, our Gospel is better than their modern thought at the best! I would sooner drink the dregs of the wine vat of Christ when the berries are sour than I would quaff the sweetest wines on the lees well-refined which come of the vintage of unbelief!

We are sure and positive in our faith in God and in His Infallible Word. O unbelievers, we are in no degree moved from the certainty of our confidence by the depression of our spirits! You may catch us, sometimes, in the dumps and say, “Now you find the Gospel does not cheer you as you thought it would.” But our answer is ready for you—we believe the Gospel whether it is yielding us present comfort or not. We would sooner be God’s dogs than the devil’s darlings! And we would sooner feed on the husks of the Gospel, if such there are, than on the finest of your wheat! Having learned to trust in the Lord, we are as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but which abides forever. As to the essential Truth of the Gospel, we defy the world in arms!

III. Now I have to finish. In the third place, let us consider THE EVIDENT REASON for all this. Why is it that they that trust in the Lord shall not be moved? Why, first, because they are trusting in the Truth of God! They have not believed a lie and, therefore, they shall not be swept from their foundation. They are trusting in One who will not deceive them and cannot fail them. They have laid their foundation on the Rock, have they not? If they had trusted to man, man would fail or change, but, lo, they are trusting to One who is Truth, Power, Immutability, Holiness, Justice— why should they be moved? I cannot imagine a reason! I ask again, why should they be moved?

They are trusting where their reliance is observed and welcomed. God loves to have many dependents about Him. It is His way of revealing Himself and manifesting His Glory. In these later ages, do you not know what the Lord has been doing? He dwelt up yonder a self-contained God— Father, Son, Holy Spirit—within His own supreme Person, self-sufficient.

He needed nothing more and if He willed anything beyond, it was that there might be creatures that could trust Him, love Him, hang upon Him, depend upon Him. He went about in creation and in Providence and in Grace to make dependents!

A great nobleman with a big house in a wide country is not content to be all alone, he needs servants and tenants and if he is of a generous spirit, he seeks the poor. He needs poor neighbors to help and he says, “This Christmas time I must give something away—is there anybody needing a round of beef? Is there anybody needing their chimney set alight with a slab of beef? Is there anybody needing a blanket in this cold season?” Thus God must have dependents. He must have those about Him who need Him. He loves dependents and I do not see why He should cast them away. Why should He? If this is what He desires—if He seeks such to worship Him who believe that He is and that He is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him—why should He reject them?

It is not the Nature of God to cast away any who rely upon Him. On the contrary, He is very careful that Faith should never have less than she has expected. He respects the courage of Faith—He never confounds her. If you open your back door and a robin comes bravely in out of the cold, do you drive it out? No, you are pleased with his assurance and give him a hearty welcome! Even so does God deal with poor trembling souls when they come to Him. We read of Charles V., the German Emperor, that when a pair of birds had built their nest among the poles and lines of his pavilion, he would not allow it to be removed though the time was come for the camp to be on the march. The birds had trusted to him and they would not be disappointed! The same zealous care does the Lord exhibit towards the trembling hopes and feeble confidences of poor souls that trust in Him! There is, therefore, no reason why they should be removed, since it is not like the Lord to cast them away.

Once more, for a true Believer to be suffered to perish would be violation of all the promises of God. He has said to such “I will never leave you, nor forsake you.” His own Word is, “the righteous shall hold on his way,” “He that believes in Him shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.” Now then, if these promises could fail, the child of God could be removed—but it is not possible so long as God is God, that he who trusts in the Lord shall ever be removed. As long as there is a God in Heaven, every Believer is safe! Let him go and rejoice in this—because it brings glory to God to save him, but for him to be lost would put a slur upon the name of the Most High! The Lord bring us to a simple faith in Jesus and keep us fixed there. Amen.

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Sermon #161 The New Park Street Pulpit 1

THE SECURITY OF THE CHURCH  
NO. 161

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 1, 1857, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

**“As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even forever.” Psalm 125:2.**

THE changes of society may well illustrate the immutability of God. In the days of David, Jerusalem was looked upon as an impregnable fortress. It is surrounded by a natural rampart of hills and appears to lie in the center of an amphitheatre raised purposely for its defense. By the ancient Jew it was considered to be an impregnable citadel. How changed now are the manners of war! A small troop could easily take the city and it must indeed be a strong army that would be able to garrison it in its present condition.

Yet while Jerusalem is changed and the figure has become inappropriate, Jerusalem’s God remains the same, for with Him is “no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” We must this morning consider the text, not as we should understand it in our day but as we should have understood it in David’s time. David looked upon the city of Jerusalem and he thought within himself, “No army can ever be able to surprise this city and however numerous may be the invading hosts, my people will always be able to hold their own in the midst of a city so firmly fortified both by nature and by god.”

In his time, indeed and in the time of his son Solomon, I suppose it would have been utterly impossible for any enemy, possessed only of the tactics of ancient warfare, to have scaled those mighty ramparts of earth which God had piled about the city. Therefore, when David said in his day, “As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people,” he meant this—“As Jerusalem is fortressed by the mountains, so are God’s people castled in the Covenant, fortressed in the Omnipotence of God and therefore they are impregnably secure.”

We shall thus understand the text and endeavor this morning to work out the great thought of the security of God’s people in the arms of Jehovah their Lord. We shall consider the text, first, as relating to the Church as a whole and then we shall endeavor to note how it applies to every individual in particular.

I. FIRST, THE CHURCH AS A WHOLE is secured by God beyond the reach of harm. She is ably garrisoned by Omnipotence and she is castled within the faithful engagements of the Covenant. How often has the Church been attacked? But how often has she been victorious? The number of her battles is just the number of her victories. Foes have come against her. They have compassed her about, they have compassed her about like bees—but in the name of God she has destroyed them. The bull of Bashan and the dog of Belial, the mighty and the insignificant, have all conspired to overthrow the Church. But He that sits in Heaven has laughed at them. The Lord has had them in derision and His Church has been as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed but which abides forever. Turn now to the roll of history and read how the Church has been fortressed by God when fiercely attacked by men.

1. Persecution has unsheathed its bloody sword and sought to rend up the Church by its roots, or fell it with its axe. Tyrants have heated their furnaces, have prepared their racks, have erected their stakes. The martyrs of Christ have been dragged by thousands to a terrible death. The confessors have had to stand forth at the risk of their lives, protesting the Gospel of God against the dominant of the times. The little flock has been scattered here and there and the dogs of persecution have worried them in every corner where they have fled. Into every nation of the earth have they wandered. In sheepskins and goatskins have they been clothed. Their houses have been in the rocks and their sleeping places in the caves of the earth.

Like the stag pursued by the hounds, they have not had a moment’s space for so much as to take their breath. But has the Church been subdued? Has she ever been overcome? O God, You have proved the invincibility of Your Truth. You have manifested the power of Your Word, for You have not only preserved Your Church in the time of greatest trouble, but, blessed be Your name, you have made the hour of her peril the hour of her greatest triumph. You will find that whenever the Church has been the most persecuted she has been the most successful.

The heathen Pro-consuls wondered when they saw the many who were prepared to die. They said, “Surely a madness must have seized upon mankind, that they cannot be content to commit suicide but are so fond of death that they must come to our bar and plead that they are lovers of Christ as if they sought to compel us to execute them.” God gave grace for the moment and in the day of persecution He braced the nerves of His people and made them mighty to do or die, as God would have it. But, surely, had not Christ’s Church been surrounded by the mountains of God’s Omnipotence, she must have fallen prey to her numerous enemies.

2. But by-and-by the devil grew wiser. He saw that overt persecution would not suffice for the putting down of God’s Church and he therefore adopted another measure not less cruel but more crafty. “I will not only slay them,” said he, “I will malign them.” Did you ever read in history the horrible reports which were set afloat in the early ages of Christianity concerning the Christians? I dare not tell you with what vices the early Christians were charged in their private assemblies. It is certain that they were the purest and most virtuous of men but never were men so fearfully belied. The very heathens who reveled in vice despised the followers of Jesus on account of crimes which the voice of the Liar had laid to their charge.

A few years elapsed and the mud which had been cast upon the snowwhite garments of Christ’s Church fell off from them, leaving them whiter than before—the clouds that sought to obscure the light of the Heaven of the Gospel were blown away and “fair as the moon and clear as the sun”— the innocence of Christ’s Church shone forth again. But the devil has adopted the same plan in every period. He has always sought to slander any race of Christians who are the means of revival. I would not believe any minister to be eminently successful if I were informed that everybody praised him. I am certain that such a case would be an exception—a glaring exception to all the rules of history.

You remember what was said of Whitfield in his day. He was charged with crimes that Sodom never knew—and yet a more pure and heavenly man God never sent to tread this wicked earth. And it ever must be so. The Church struggling with sin and wickedness, must through the enmity of the Evil One, find herself bespattered and besmeared with slander. The wicked, when they can do nothing else against the righteous, will spit falsehood on them. But has the Church suffered through their slander, or has ever a solitary Christian lost anything by it? No, the Lord God who set the mountains round about Jerusalem has so put Himself about His people that no weapon that is formed against us shall prosper and every tongue that rises against us in judgment we shall condemn.

This is the heritage of the people of the Lord. Fear not, O Church of Christ, the slimy serpent of slander—for even in your cradle, like Hercules, when the marks of slander came against you—you did slay them in your infantile grasp more than a conqueror through Him that loved you. And now that God is with you and the shout of a king in your midst, fear not though all men should speak against you—your Master will yet honor you and you will come up from the pool of slander like a sheep from the washing—the fairer for your black baptism, the more admired, the more lovely for all the scorn and ignominy that men have cast upon you!

3. Again, Satan learned wisdom and he said, “Now inasmuch as I cannot destroy this people, neither by sword nor slander, lo, I will do this—I will send into their midst wolves in sheep’s clothing. I will inspire many different heretics, carried away with their own lusts, who shall in the midst of the Church promulgate lies and prophesy smooth things in the name of the Lord. And Satan has done all this with a vengeance. In every era of the Church there have been numberless bands of heretics. Only a small company have in certain times adhered to the Truth, while the mass of professing Christians have gone aside and have perished in the gainsaying of Korah.

Look at the earliest days of Christianity. Scarcely were the Apostles in their graves and their souls in Paradise than there sprang up men who denied the Lord that bought them. Some who did evil that good might come, whose damnation was just. Heresies of all kinds began to spring up, even in the first fifty years after the departure of our Master. Since that time the world has been very prolific of every shape and form of doctrine except the Truth. And down to these modern times heresies have prevailed. Now behold how Satan seeks to quench the light of Israel. There is the heresy of Rome, she that sits upon many waters seeks as far as she can to delude the Church and to draw the rest of the world aside from the Truth of God.

The Roman Catholic Church, with all the craft of Hell, seeks to proselyte wherever she may from those who are the professed followers of the Gospel. She will change her shape in every land. In her own dominions she will build the dungeon and practice intolerance. In a land of freedom she can plead for liberty and pretend to be its warmest friend. Base harlot that she is, her whoredom has not yet ceased, nor is the cup of her fornications full. She seeks still to devour the nations and swallow them up.

There is her Sister the Puseyism of the Church of England. I speak nothing now concerning my evangelical Brethren. God Almighty shield them and bless them! My only marvel is that they do not come out altogether and touch not the unclean thing. But, alas, Puseyism is seeking to eat out the very vitals of our godliness, telling the masses that the priest is everything—putting down Christ and exalting the man. Putting baptismal water in the place of the influences of the Divine Spirit and exalting sacraments into the place which is only to be held by the Lord our God. Truly this dangerous and deceptive, beautiful and foolish system of religion is much to be feared—although we know that the true Church of God must ever be safe—for against her the gates of Hell shall not prevail.

Alas, that we should have to say something else! And this concerning those who are commonly called evangelicals, who have a form of error more insidious and evil still. Alas that I should have to “cry aloud and spare not,” concerning these matters. These are days when a false charity would have us hold our tongues against the evils that we hate. My Brethren, in the midst of our Dissenting Churches, there is a system which does not deserve the name of “system,” except from its systematic desire to crush every system. There is a system springing up which takes out of the Gospel every Truth that makes it precious. It plucks every jewel out of the crown of the Redeemer and tramples it under the foot of men.

In a large number of our pulpits at this time you will not hear the Gospel preached in a month all together. Anything else you like you may hear preached—Anti-state Churchism, political affairs—these are the current staple of the day. Christ and Him crucified may go to the dogs for them. Politics fill up the pulpits and philosophy stands in the place of theology. And when there is a little theology, what do they say? Instead of exalting the Holy Spirit as the first and prime agent, they are ever exhorting men to do what only God’s Spirit can do for them and not reminding them that the effectual grace of God is necessary. The Covenant, the “Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure” is sneered at.

The banner once held so manfully by Calvin, who took it from the hand of Augustine leaping over centuries to grasp it, who again received it from the hand of the Apostle Paul—the banner of the old fashioned Truth is to a great degree furled and we are told that these old doctrines are effete and out of date. Puritanical divinity, they say, is not the divinity for these times. We must have a new Gospel for a go-ahead era. We must have sermons preached which, if they are not the absolute denial of every doctrine of the Gospel, are at least sneers at them all. The man effects to be so supremely wise that he, in his own brain, can devise a Gospel better and fairer than the ancient Gospel of the blessed God.

Now, this is one of the attempts of the Enemy to put down the Truth but he will never be able to do it, for, “As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even forever.”

I will not be hard but I must say a word to many of my Brethren of the denomination to which I belong. There are many of you who call yourselves Particular Baptists, by which you mean that you are Calvinists. And yet, Gentlemen, your consciences are easy and some of you have never preached upon election since you were ordained. The peculiarities of “the five points” are concealed. These things, you say, are offensive. And so, Gentlemen, you would rather offend God than you would offend man. But you reply, “These things, you know, are high doctrines. They had better not be preached—they will not be practical.”

I think that the climax of all man’s blasphemy is centered in that utterance. Will you dare to say, “There are some parts of God’s Truth that we do not want to preach to the people”? Tell me that God put a thing in the Bible that I am not to preach! You are finding fault with my God! But you say, “It will be dangerous.” What? God’s Truth dangerous? I should not like to stand in your shoes when you have to face your Maker on the Day of Judgment after such an utterance as that. If it is not God’s Truth, let it alone. But if you believe the thing, out with it. The world will like you just as well for being honest and if the world does not, your Master will.

Keep back nothing. Preach the whole Gospel. Preach man’s responsibility—do not stutter at it. Preach Divine sovereignty—do not refuse to talk of election—to use the word, even if they sneer. Tell men that if they believe not the blood is on their own heads and then if the high people turn against you, snap your finger in their face. Tell them you do not care— that to you it is nothing—nothing at all to please man. Your Master is in Heaven and you will please Him, come fair, come foul. This done, Satan would be balked and defeated. But at the present moment he is mightily

striving thus to overthrow the Church by ill doctrine.  
4. The craftiest invention of the devil, with which he seeks in the last  
place to put out the Church, is a device which has amazed me above every  
other. “Now,” says Satan, “If I can quench the Church, neither by persecution, nor slander, nor heresy—I will invent another mode of destroying  
her.” And I have often marveled at the depths of deceit which are centered  
in this last invention of Satan. Satan seeks to divide the Church, to set us  
apart from one another and not allow those who love the same Truth to  
meet with each other to work together in love and peace and harmony. “Now,” says the devil, “I have it. Here is one body of good men—they are  
very fond of one part of God’s Truth. Now, there are two sets of truths in  
the Bible. One set deals with man as responsible creature, the other class  
of truths deals with God as the infinite Sovereign, dispensing His mercy as  
He pleases. Now these dear brethren are very fond of man’s responsibility—they will preach it and they will preach it so that if they hear the  
brother on the other side of the street preach God’s sovereignty, they will  
be very upset with him. And then I will make the brethren who preach Divine sovereignty forget the other part of the Truth and hate the brethren  
that preach it.”  
Do you not see the craft of the enemy? Both of these good men are  
right. They both preach parts of Truth. But they each so set their part of  
Truth at the top of the other that a rivalry commences. Why, I have  
stepped in and heard a godly Brother preach a sermon that sent my blood  
through my veins at a most rapid rate while he earnestly preached of sin,  
of righteousness and of judgment to come! But he spoilt all his sermon by  
indirectly hinting—“Now, take care you don’t hear Mr. So-and-So, because  
he will contradict all this and tell you that you are saved by grace and that  
it is not of yourself but it is the gift of God.”  
I went, of course, and heard the good man, because I was told not to  
go. Well, he was preaching that “it is not of the will of the flesh, nor of the  
will of man but of God,” and I thought he handled the text very manfully  
when he showed that God was the Author of all salvation. Only in a parenthesis he told us not to go to that work-mongering shop on the other  
side of the road. Why, they were both right but they had each got different  
parts of the Truth—one, that Truth which dealt with man as responsible.  
The other, that which deals with God as a Sovereign. And the devil had so  
perverted their judgment that they could not see that both things were  
true but they must go fighting each other just to make sport for Satan. Now, I wonder that the Church has not been utterly destroyed by this  
last device, for it is the craftiest thing, I believe, that Satan has yet  
brought under our notice—though without doubt his depths are too deep  
for our understanding. But, Brethren, despite all this, let bigotry rave, let  
intolerance rail till it goes mad, the Church is just as secure—for God has set Himself round about her—“even as the mountains are round about  
Jerusalem, from henceforth even forever.”  
And now just notice, before we leave this point, that as the Church always has been preserved, the text assures us she always will be, henceforth even forever. There is a nervous old woman here. Last Saturday night  
she read the newspaper and she saw something about five or six clergymen going over to Rome—she laid down her spectacles and she began crying, “Oh! the Church is in danger, the Church is in danger.” Ah, put your  
spectacles back on! That is all right—never mind about the loss of those  
fellows. Better gone. We did not want them. Do not cry if fifty more follow  
them. Do not be at all alarmed. Some Church may be in danger but God’s  
Church is not. That is safe enough, that shall stand secure, even to the  
end.  
I remember with what alarm some of my friends received the tidings of  
the geological discoveries of modern times which did not quite agree with  
their interpretation of the Mosaic history of the creation. They thought it  
an awful thing that science should discover something which seemed to  
contradict the Scriptures. Well, we lived over the geological difficulty, after  
all. And since then there have been different sets of philosophic infidels  
who have risen up and made wonderful discoveries and poor timid Christians have thought, “What a terrible thing! This surely will be the end of  
all true religion. When science can bring facts against us, how shall we be  
able to stand?”  
They just waited about another week and on a sudden they found that  
science was not their enemy but their friend, for the truth, though tried in  
a furnace like silver seven times, is ever a gainer by the trial. Ah, you that  
hate the Church, she shall ever be a thorn in your side! Oh, you that  
would batter her walls to pieces, know this—that she is impregnable, not  
one of her stakes shall be removed, not one of her cords shall be broken!  
God has fixed her where she is and by Divine decree established her on a  
Rock. Do you hate the Church? Hate on—it will never be moved by all  
your hate. Do you threaten to crush it? It shall crush you but you shall  
never injure it. Do you despise and laugh at it? Ah, the day is coming  
when the laugh shall be on the other side! Wait a little while and when her  
Master shall suddenly come in His glory, then shall it be seen on whose  
side is the victory and who were the fools that laughed.  
Thus we have disposed of the first point—THE CHURCH impregnably  
secure, fortressed and castled by God.  
II. What is true of the mass is true of the unit. The fact which relates to  
the Church includes in it EVERY MEMBER OF THE CHURCH. God has  
fortressed His people so that every Believer is infallibly secure. There are  
in the world certain people who teach that Christ gives grace to men and  
tells them, “Now, you shall be saved if you will persevere. But this must be  
left to yourself.” This reminds me of an old Puritanical illustration, “The Duke of Alva having given some prisoners their lives, they afterwards petitioned him for some food. His answer was, that, ‘he would grant them  
life but no meat.’ And they were famished to death.”  
The deniers of final perseverance represent the Deity in a similar view—  
“God promises eternal life to the saints if they endure to the end, but He  
will not grant to them the continuance of that grace without which eternal  
life cannot be had.” Oh, surely if that were true, eternal life were not  
worth a fig to any of us! Unless our God who first saves us did engage to  
keep us alive and to provide for all our necessities, of what use were eternal life at all? But we bless His name—  
*“Whom once He loves He never leaves,  
But loves them to the end.  
Once in Christ, in Christ forever,  
Nothing from His love can sever.”*  
The Christian is fortified and secured from all harm. And yet, O Child of  
God, there are many that will seek to destroy you and your fears will often  
tell you that you are in the jaws of the enemy. Providence will often seem  
against you, your eyes shall be seldom dry. It may be funeral shall follow  
funeral. Loss shall follow loss. A burning house shall be succeeded by a  
blasted crop. The Christian in this world is not secured against the perils  
which happen to manhood. Oh, Child of God, it may seem that all things  
are against you! Perhaps all God’s waves and billows will go over you. You  
may learn first hand what hunger and nakedness and thirst mean. You may be found in this world houseless, friendless, fatherless, motherless—but remember that neither famine, nor hunger, nor poverty, nor  
sickness, nor weakness, nor contempt—can separate you from the love of  
God, which is in Christ Jesus your Lord. You may sink ever so low but  
you can never sink lower than the arm of God can reach. Your poor ship  
may be drifted before the gale but it shall never go so fast but God can  
keep her off the rocks. Be of good cheer, the trials of this mortal life shall  
work out for you “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.” Again—you may be tempted by the world. Traps may be set for you on  
every hand. You may be tempted by your flesh. Your corruptions may  
have great power over you and often stagger your faith and make you  
tremble lest you should be utterly overthrown. And the devil may set upon  
you with fiery darts—he may pierce you with foul insinuations. He may  
almost make you blaspheme and with terrible suggestions he may drive  
you well-near to despair. But remember—  
*“Hell and your sins obstruct your course,  
But Hell and sin are vanquished foes.  
Your Jesus nailed them to His Cross  
And sang the triumph when He rose.”*  
And you, too, may be overcome by sin. You may fall—God grant you  
may not. But though you are kept eminently consistent and extremely virtuous, you will sin and sometimes that sin will get such a head against you that you can scarcely stem the torrent. Conscience will whisper, “How could you be a child of God and yet sin thus?” And Satan will howl in your ears, “He that sins knows not God.” And so you will be ready to be destroyed by your sin. But then, in the hour of your dark distress, read this verse—“As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is

round about His people from henceforth even forever.”  
Be confident in this, that even sin itself shall not be able to cut the  
golden link which joins you to your Savior. Have you ever heard the sermons of those people who believe in the apostasy of the saints? Have you  
not heard them very pathetically enlarge on the dangers of Christians?  
They say, “Yes, you may serve God all your life but perhaps in the last article of death your faith may faint, sin may prevail and you may be destroyed.” And they illustrate their very beautiful and comfortable idea by  
the figure of a ship foundering just as she reaches the harbor. Now, many  
wooden ships, I doubt not, do founder and many ships built in free will  
dockyards founder, too. But the chosen vessels of Mercy are insured  
against perishing and were never known to be shipwrecked yet. As an old Divine says, there are no wrecks to be seen on the sea which  
rolls between Jerusalem on earth and Jerusalem above. There are many  
tempests but never any shipwrecks. Bishop Hooker sweetly says “Blessed  
forever and ever, be that mother’s child whose faith has made him the  
child of God. The earth may shake, the pillars thereof may tremble under  
us, the countenance of the Heavens may be appalled, the sun may lose  
his light, the moon her beauty, the stars their glory—but concerning the  
man that trusted in God the fire has proclaimed itself unable to singe a  
hair of his head.  
“If lions, beasts ravenous by nature and keen by hunger, being set to  
devour, have, as it were, religiously adored the very flesh of a faithful  
man, what is there in the world that shall change his heart, overthrow his  
faith, alter his affections towards God, or the affection of God to him?” Oh,  
when we once believe this doctrine and receive it in our hearts as true,  
what a tendency it has to make the spirit buoyant in the deep waters and  
sing in the midst of the fierce billows! Who should fear, if our salvation is  
made secure by the Covenant of God?  
And now, for a few moments, without detaining you too long, I will try  
to show some reasons why it is quite certain that the Believer cannot by  
any possibility perish. I want to do this because I have a multitude of letters from this large congregation every week. And I have to say to the glory  
of God there are many of those letters that make me so glad I can scarcely  
contain myself—while others arouse all the anxiety of my heart. Among  
them is one something like this. “Sir, I know that I was once a child of  
God. Many years ago I had such delightful feelings and such ecstasies  
that I cannot doubt but what if I had died then I should have gone to Heaven. But now, Sir, I am in such distress that I am quite sure if I were  
to die now I should be lost.”  
Now, my Brother, I know you are here. You may take it to yourself.  
There are only two solutions to your mystery. If you were a child of God  
then, you are a child of God now. And if you would have gone to Heaven  
then you will go to Heaven now—be you what you may. If you ever were  
regenerated, regeneration is a work that is never done but once. And if it  
has been done once for you, it has not lost its efficacy—you are a child of  
God still. But I am inclined to think you never were a child of God—you  
had a few fine ecstasies. But you never knew the plague of your own  
heart. I am afraid, young man, you were never taken into God’s stripping  
room, never were tied up to the halberts and never had the ten-thronged  
whip of Law on your back.  
But, anyhow, do not tell me any more that you were converted once but  
not now, because if you were converted to God, God would have kept you.  
“The righteous shall hold on His way and he that has clean hands shall  
wax stronger and stronger.” And now shall I tell you why it is certain a Believer cannot perish? In the first place, how can a Believer perish if that  
Scripture is true which says, that every Believer is a member of Christ’s  
body? If you will only grant me my head afloat above the water I will give  
you leave to drown my fingers.  
Try it—you cannot do it. As long as a man’s head is above the flood you  
cannot drown him—it is clean impossible—nor yet drown any part of his  
body. Now, a Christian is a part of Christ, the Head. Christ, the Head of  
the body, is in Heaven and until you can drown the Head of the body, you  
cannot drown the body and if the Head is in Heaven, beyond the reach of  
harm, then every member of the body is alive and secure and shall at last  
be in Heaven, too. Do you imagine, O Heretic, that Christ will lose a member of His body? Will Christ dwell in Heaven with a mangled frame? God  
forbid!  
If Christ has taken us into union with Himself, though we are the  
meanest members of His Heavenly body, He will not allow us to be cut  
away. Will a man lose an arm, or a leg, or an hand, while he can help  
himself? Of course not! And while Christ is Omnipotent nothing shall  
pluck His children from His body, for they are of “His flesh and His  
bones.” But again—how can a Believer perish and yet God be true? God  
has said, “When you pass through the rivers I will be with you and the  
floods shall not overflow you.” Now, if they should overflow us, how can  
God be true? “When you pass through the fires you shall not be burned,  
neither shall the flame kindle upon you.”  
Then if we could ever find a Believer consumed, we could prove God’s  
Promise broken. But we cannot do that. God is with His children and ever  
will be. Besides has He not said, “I give unto My sheep eternal life and  
they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hands”? Tell me, Beloved, how can God be God and yet His people be plucked out of His hands? Surely He were not God to us if He were unfaithful to a Promise so oft repeated and so solemnly confirmed. Besides, mark you this—if one saint should fall away and perish, God would not only break His word but His oath, for He has sworn by Himself because He could swear by no greater, “that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled  
for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.”  
No, an oath-breaking God, a promise-despising Jehovah is an impossibility—and therefore a perished child of God is alike impossible. But we need not fear, Beloved, that we shall ever perish, if we love the  
Savior for the last reason is all potent. Will Christ lose that which He has  
bought with His own blood? Yes, there are men with judgments so perverted that they believe Christ died for those that are damned and bought  
with His own blood men that perish. Well, if they choose to believe that, I  
do not envy them the elasticity of their intellects. But this I conceive to be  
but an axiom, that what Christ has paid for so dearly with His own heart’s  
blood He will have. If He loved us well enough to bear the excruciating  
agonies of the Cross, I know He loves “well enough to keep us to the end.”  
“If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His  
Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by His life.” And now I close by addressing myself for a moment or two to ungodly  
persons present. Thinking persons they must be, or else what I say will  
not be likely to be noticed by them. When I was a boy I remember having a  
meditation something like this—“Now, I should not like to be a thief or a  
murderer, or an unclean person.” I had such a training that I had an abhorrence of sin of that sort. “And yet,” thought I to myself, “I may be hung  
yet. There is no reason why I should not turn out a thief,” because I recollected there were some of my schoolfellows, older than I was, who had already become very eminent in dishonesty. And I thought, “why may not  
I?”  
No one can tell the rapture of my spirit, when I thought I saw in my Bible the doctrine that if I gave my heart to Christ He would keep me from  
sin and preserve me as long as I lived. I was not quite sure of it—not quite  
certain that was the Truth of the Bible, though I thought so. But I remember when I heard the minister of some small hyper Chapel utter the  
same Truth—Oh, my heart was full of rapture! I panted after that Gospel.  
“Oh!” I thought, if God would but love me, if I might but know myself to be  
His!” The enchanting part of it was that if I were so He would keep me to  
the end. That made me so in love with the Gospel, that boy as I was,  
knowing nothing savingly about the Gospel, it made me love the thought  
of being saved, because, if saved, God would never turn me out of doors. That made the Gospel very precious to me in my childhood—so that  
when the Holy Spirit showed me my guilt and led me to seek a Savior— that doctrine was like a bright star to my spirit. I always looked forward to that. I thought, “Well, if I can once look to Christ and cast myself on Him, then He will grant me grace that I shall to the end endure.” And oh, that doctrine is so precious to me now, that I do think if anybody could possibly convince me that final perseverance is not a Truth of the Bible, I should never preach again! For I feel I would have nothing worth preach  
ing.  
If you could once make me believe that the regeneration of God might  
fail of its effect and that the love of God might be separated from His own  
chosen people, you might keep that Bible to yourself. Between its cover  
there is nothing that I love, nothing that I wish for, no Gospel that is suitable for me. I count it to be a Gospel beneath the dignity of God and beneath the dignity of even fallen manhood, unless it be everlasting, “ordered in all things and sure.”  
And now, poor trembling Sinner, you that know your sins—believe on  
Christ this morning and you are saved and saved forever. Do but this  
moment look to Him that died upon the tree and, my Brothers and Sisters, give me your hand and let us weep for joy that you believe and let  
our joy accumulate when we remember that the pillars of the Heavens  
may totter, the solid foundations of the earth may reel, the countenance of  
the Heavens may be astonished, the sun may be turned into darkness

and the moon into blood—but nothing shall pluck you from the strength of  
Israel’s hands! You are, you shall be infallibly secure. Come, O Holy Spirit,  
bless these words, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #867 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

TEARFUL SOWING AND JOYFUL REAPING  
NO. 867

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 25, 1869, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“He that goes forth and weeps, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” Psalm 126:6.**

THE whole of our life we are sowing. In activity, in suffering, in thought, in word we are always scattering imperishable seed. Some sow amidst laughter and merriment—they sow unto the lusts of the flesh and shall of the flesh reap corruption. Theirs is easy work and suitable to their inclinations. All around them siren songs cheer them in the fields of transgression as they go forth with the seed of hemlock to scatter it broadcast in the furrows. Alas, for them, they shall reap under other skies—they shall gather sheaves of flame in the harvest of fire—in the day of vengeance of our God. They have sown the wind and they shall reap the whirlwind and who shall help them in that hour of terror?

A chosen company are sowing unto the spirit and in their case, albeit that they are blessed among men and shall reap amid eternal songs, they sow in sadness, for sowing unto the spirit involves a self-denial, a struggling against the flesh, a running counter to the fallen instincts of our depraved nature—a wrestling and a life of agony involving plentiful showers of tears. To sow unto the spirit, in the field of obedience or patient endurance, is such a work as only the Holy Spirit can enable us to accomplish. And even then the oppositions from outward circumstances, from the powers of Hell and from the depravity of our nature is oftentimes so severe that we are compelled with bitter tears and strong cries to lift up our heart unto God out of the depths of anguish.

They who sow unto the spirit, as a rule, have to sow in tears, but their reaping will so compensate them that even in the prospect of it they may dry their eyes, reckoning that these light afflictions which are but for a moment, are not worthy to be compared with the Glory which shall be revealed in them. Our momentary weeping, while we let fall the precious seed, is scarcely to be thought of in comparison with the mighty sheaves of the exceeding Glory in the land where tears are Divinely and finally wiped from every eye.

The principle that the mournful sowing of the saints will end in a joyful reaping stands good in regard to the whole spiritual life, but it is equally applicable to individual incidents in that life. For instance, many prayers are offered under circumstances of great depression of spirit, with mighty vehemence and desire, but perhaps under strong temptations to unbelief. Over such prayers, cataracts of tears are poured forth, and, Brethren, you may count it a blessed sign when you can sigh and cry in your supplications, for your tears are like the prevalent wrestling of Jacob when he won the name of Israel. Your agony of spirit, like the plea of Moses, shall hold the Lord and bind His hand.

There is a conquering power in the heart’s tears in prayer. You shall have what you desire when you desire it unto weeping. Take the anguish of your spirit to be the premonition of the fulfillment of the promise. You shall come again out of your closet crying, like Luther, “I have conquered.” You shall see sheaves of blessing, since you have sown your prayer amid a shower of tears.

Some Believers also sow in sadness through daily sufferings. It is appointed unto some to be the daughters of affliction, the sons of pain. Happy is it when those who are thus called to suffer continue to sow while they suffer. It is not always so easy to be practically useful when one has at the same time to maintain patience and resignation. We are apt to think that one form of service at a time is enough and perhaps it may be so, but if we can add another, our blessedness will be doubled! To shed tears and yet to sow! To be racked with pain and to turn the couch into a pulpit! To make the sick bed a tribune from which to tell of the love of Christ—oh, this is blessed living! To work for Christ Jesus under such terrible disadvantages shall surely win a double recompense—and if the preacher fails from the pulpit—yet shall not the sick saint be successful from his bed?

And if the orator shall not prevail in the strength of his manhood, yet shall the pining consumptive, when he warns his friend to escape from the wrath to come, assuredly win success—his weakness shall be his strength and his sickness shall put force into his speech. I doubt not that the text may be so read as to imply that the heart-sorrow of men engaged in the Lord’s service shall help to secure for them from the hand of Divine mercy a double reward. Those who can sow while yet they weep, shall, beyond all question, come again rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them.

There are many other instances which I might thus detain you with, but I prefer at once to proceed to the main business of this morning and that is to consider this text in its relation to every Christian worker. Let us first describe his service—“He that goes forth and weeps, bearing precious seed.” Let us, secondly, contemplate his reward—“He shall come again with rejoicing, bearing his sheaves with him.” Let us in the third place, notice the certainty which, like a golden link, binds these two things together—the weeping service and the rejoicing success.

I. First, then, dear Friends, behold THE CHOSEN WORKER FOR GOD, the man who shall reap an abundant harvest. It is said of him that he goes forth. Every word here is instructive. What is intended by going forth? Does it mean, first, that he goes forth from God? Observe that our text speaks of his coming again—but where is he to return at the last with his sheaves but to his God? Then, as he returns to the place from which he went forth, surely he goes forth from God! And I understand by this that the chosen servant of God has received consciously a Divine commission from Heaven.

If he has never in the temple seen the glory of God, high and lifted up. If he has never seen an angel fly with the golden tongs to bear a live coal from off the altar to touch his lips. If he has never heard the voice saying, “Whom shall we send? And who will go for us?” yet his heart has said, “Here am I, send me.” He has felt within his soul a yearning to be useful, a panting which could no more be quenched, unless he can win souls, than the panting of the deer could be stopped unless it could bath itself in the water brooks. I will not believe that any man can be useful in the Church of God unless he feels a Divine vocation. Especially is it a sin beyond all others for a man to take up the ministry as a mere profession and to follow it as though he might have followed something else.

I remember the saying of an old divine who was asked by a young man whether he should enter the ministry. He replied, “Not if you can help it.” No man has any right to be a preacher unless he is one who cannot help it. He must be one who feels that he is driven into it, and that woe is unto him unless he preach the Gospel! In the same way is it in the other departments of Christian service. You Christian people all have a duty, you all have responsibilities—but your duties and responsibilities, somehow or other, never move you until they take the active form of a vocation. I would to God that every Christian in this Church felt that he had a call as from the Christ of God exalted on His Throne to go out and tell others of the way of salvation!

I wish that the men and women who have here banded themselves together in a sacred confraternity felt every one of them commissioned of God, each one according to his ability, to pluck brands from the burning, to rescue souls from going down into the Pit. It is in going forth from God with His call upon you that you have the prospect of coming back successful—no way else! This going forth from God seems to me to imply that the worker had been with God in prayer. We must go fresh from the Mercy Seat to the field of service if we would gather plenteously. Our truest strength lies in prayer.

I am persuaded, Brethren, that we are losing much of blessing which might come upon the Church through our negligence in private supplications. I cannot pry into your prayer closets, but I believe that in the conscience of many of you there will be an affirmative voice to the charge I lay against some of you—you have restrained prayer before God. Your restraining of prayer, if you seek to serve God, is binding your own hands and cutting the sinews of your strength! As you could not expect to be vigorous if you denied yourselves food, so neither can you hope to be strong if you deny yourselves prayer. Get close to God, for strength flows out of Him. Keep at a distance from Him and you lose all power and become weak as water.

“He that goes forth,” must mean, then, that he has stood before the Mercy Seat. That he has told out the story of his needs where the blood is sprinkled and then has gone forth in the power which prayer alone can bring from Heaven to scatter his precious seed among men. Does not this going forth from God imply, also, that the man has been in communion with God? He wears a shining face who has looked into the face of God and in the power of that brightness he shall make the desert bloom and the wilderness rejoice! He has looked up to the God of miracles and held fellowship with Him! The Lord lends much of Himself to the man who is much with Him. He endows with marvelous power the man who has learned to live close to Him and to walk in the light of His Countenance.

To “go forth,” however, may be looked at from another angle. Does it not refer to whether the man is to go as well as to the place from which he comes? “He that goes forth,” that is, away from the world, outside the camp. If you would be serviceable, you must come right out from the common track and in holy decision step out of the ranks for Christ. Of all the men who lived on the face of the earth, the most remarkable and the most singular in His age was the Lord Jesus Christ. There was no man who was so manly, no man so unlike a mere monk or separatist as Christ. He eat and drank just as other men did and yet there was a something about His Character which distinguished Him altogether from the whole mass of humanity.

He had gone forth, evidently, outside the camp—holy, harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners. If you want to win golden sheaves for Christ, you must come out, my dear Brother, as your Lord did. Depend upon it, the world’s religion is not that which breeds useful men! Nor, though I may be rebuked for saying it, is the ordinary character of our Churches equal to the production of successful servants of Christ. Common religion has become, nowadays, so cold and dead and sleepy a thing, that unless you can come out of it and get above it, you cannot expect to be one of those who shall come again rejoicing in abundant sheaves.

Aspire to be something more than the mass of Church members! Lift up your cry to God and beseech Him to fire you with a nobler ambition than that which possesses the common Christian—that you may be found faithful unto God at the last and may win many crowns for your Lord and Master, Christ. He that goes forth taking up Christ’s Cross, leaving the multitude and separating himself for service—he shall win the great service! Going forth may represent, also, entire giving up of yourself to that particular field of labor to which God has called you. As when the day dawns, as the laborer goes forth to plow in the field, so the consecrated man hastens to his department of service.

He is not running here and there wasting time, but, like a man who knows his vocation, he goes straight to it and abides in it until the evening of his life. I am inclined to think that there is a version of these words which may be very useful to enterprising Believers. “He that goes forth”— that is, gets beyond the range of ordinary Christian labor—he shall find a double harvest. The most successful servants of God have been those who have not built upon other men’s foundations, but have ventured to break up new soil.

There comes very little reward to me from preaching to the many who regularly attend this Tabernacle, because the most of you have heard the Gospel so long that if there were any probabilities of its converting you, in all likelihood you would have been converted long ago. The probabilities seem to be that the soil upon which the seed will germinate is already plowed and only rock remains—that the elect of God have been gathered out of my congregation and that we may not expect, in our ministry, to see great results in the future among our older hearers. But whenever we have broken up fresh ground—when we have gone someplace not usually occupied for worship, when we have got at a new piece of unbroken prairie—what wonderful results have always followed!

Why, I fear there were more conversions in the Surrey Music Hall than there ever have been here. In Exeter Hall, God converted more in proportion by our ministry than He has done of late in this house—not because the ministry has changed, nor the blessing upon it—but because continuing to plow upon the same old soil, again and again, we can hardly expect to reap much of a harvest! Hearts have become seared! Consciences have become callous! By going forth to get fresh ears to hear and fresh hearts to know the joyful sound, we may hope to see golden sheaves.

I say, then, to you Christian workers, reach out after those who have been thought to be beyond the range of hope! Seek to convert those who have been neglected! Let it be the effort of Christian people to go after those that nobody else is going after—the best fruit will be gleaned from boughs up to now untouched. And let our missionary operations be continually breaking forth, on the right hand and on the left, as opportunity may be given. If the Burmans rejected the Gospel, the Karens received it. Sometimes, when a superior race, so called, has rejected the Truth of God, those who have been downtrodden pariahs of the land have been made ready by God to accept the Gospel.

There is more hope, I think, of conversion work to be done in Italy and in Spain than in any other parts of the world. Where the ministry of Christ has been all but silenced, the Truth will come like an angel’s hymn and there it is that we may expect to hear glad hearts welcoming the Good News. “He that goes forth”—not he that sits at home, throwing random handfuls out of his window and expecting the corn to spring up on his doorstep—but he who obeys the Word, “Go you into all the world,” and leaps over the hedges which shut in the narrow sphere of nominal Christendom and labors to have fresh lands, fresh provinces, fresh wildernesses broken up for Christ! He is the man most likely to win the reward.

The next word is, “ and weeps.” What does this mean? I take it, Brethren, that, as in the first words, “he that goes forth,” we see the man’s mode of service, so here we note a little of the man, himself. He goes forth and weeps. The man likely to be successful is a man of like passions with ourselves, not an angel, but a man, for he weeps. But then he is very much a man. He is a man of strong passions, weeping because he has a sensitive heart. The man who sleeps, the man who can be content to do nothing and is satisfied with no result is not the man to win sheaves. God chooses, usually, not men of great brains and a vast mind, but men of true-hearted, deep natures—with souls that can desire and pant and long and heave and throb!

It is a great thing that makes a genuine man weep. Tears do not lie quite so fleet with most of us. But the man who cannot weep cannot preach, at least, if he never feels tears within, even if they do not show themselves without, he can scarcely be the man to handle such themes as those which God has committed to His people’s charge. If you would be useful, dear Brothers and Sisters, you must cultivate the sacred passions. You must think much upon the Divine realities until they move and stir your souls. Men are dying and perishing! Hell is filling! Christ is dishonored! Souls are not converted to Christ! The Holy Spirit is grieved! The kingdom does not come to God, but Satan rules and reigns—all this ought to be well considered by us and our heart ought to be stirred until, like the Prophet, we say, “O that my head were waters and my eyes a fountain of tears.”

The useful worker for Christ is a man of tenderness, not a stoic—not one who does not care whether souls are saved or not. He is not one so wrapped up in the thought of Divine Sovereignty as to be absolutely petrified, but one who feels as if he died in the death of sinners and perished in their ruin—as though he could only be made happy in their happiness, or find a paradise in their being caught up to Heaven. The weeping, then, shows you what kind of man it is whom the Lord of the Harvest largely employs.

He is a man in earnest, a man of tenderness, a man in love with souls, a man wrapped up in his calling, a man carried away with compassion, a man who feels for sinners—in a word, a Christ-like man. Not a stone, but a man who is touched with a feeling of our infirmities, a man of heart, a man ready to weep because sinners will not weep. “Why does he weep?” asks someone—“He is on an honorable work and he is to have a glorious reward.” My Brethren, he weeps as he goes forth because he feels his own insufficiency. He often sighs within himself, “Who is sufficient for these things?” He did not know what a weak creature he was until he came into contact with other men’s hearts. He fancied it was easy work to serve God, but now he is somewhat of Joshua’s mind, “You cannot serve the Lord.”

Every effort that he makes betrays to him his own lack of natural strength. Well may he weep! He never teaches in the Sunday school class—he never prays at the sick bed but what he feels ashamed when he has done his work that he did not do it better. He never takes a little child on his knee to talk to it of Jesus, but he wishes that he could have spoken more tenderly of the sweet gentleness of the Lover of little children. He is never satisfied with himself, for he forms a right estimate of himself and he weeps to think that he is so poor an instrument for so good a Master.

Moreover, he weeps because of the hardness of men’s hearts. He thought, at first, he should only have to tell these great Truths of God and men would leap for joy. Have you ever seen fancy pictures at the head of our missionary magazines—of respectable gentlemen dressed in black suits, landing out of boats manned by devout sailors, carrying Bibles in their hands—and these well-to-do evangelists are surrounded by Turks and Chinese, black people, and copper-colored people, who are running down to the seashore and taking these precious Bibles in their hands and looking as if they had found a priceless treasure?

All, it is all in the picture, it is nowhere else—the thing does not occur! Natives of barbarous isles and heathen kingdoms do not receive the Gospel in that way. Heralds of the Cross have to do a deal of rough work and toil! The Gospel, which ought to be welcomed, is rejected! And as there was no room for Christ in the inn when He became Incarnate, so there is no room for the Gospel in the hearts of mankind. Yes, and this makes us weep, since where there should be so much readiness to accept, there is so much obstinacy and rebellion.

The Christian worker weeps because, when he does see some signs of success, he is often disappointed. Blossoms come not to be fruit, or fruit half-ripe drops from the tree. He has to weep before God, oftentimes, because he is afraid that these failures may be the result of his own lack of tact or need of Divine Grace. I marvel not that the minister weeps, or that any worker for Christ bedews the seed with his tears—the wonder is he does not lament far more than he does! Perhaps we should all weep more if we were more Christ-like, more what we should be. And perhaps our working would have about it more Divine results if it came more out of our very soul, if we played less at soul-saving and worked more at it. If we cast soul and strength and every energy of our being into the work, perhaps God would reward us at a far greater rate.

The next point is he “ bears precious seed.” Here, indeed, is a special point of all success. There is no soul-winning by untruthful preaching. We must preach the Truth of God as it is in Jesus. Workers for God must tell out the Gospel and keep to the Gospel. You must continually dwell upon the real Truth as it is in God’s Word, for nothing but this will win souls. Now in order to this, my fellow workers for Christ, we must know God’s Truth. We must know it by an inward experience of its power as well as in theory. We must know it as precious Truth. It must be precious seed to us for which we should be prepared to die if it were necessary. We must understand it as being precious because it comes from God. Precious because it tells to man the best of news. Precious because sprinkled with the blood of Jesus. Precious because Christ values it and all holy men esteem it beyond all price.

We must, therefore, not deliver it with flippancy, not talk of solemn themes with levity, not tell out the Gospel as though we were retelling a mere tale from the Arabian Nights, a romance meant for amusement, or to beguile a passing hour. O Brethren, we who sow for God must sow solemnly and in right good earnest, because the seed is precious seed, more precious than we can ever estimate! Work for God, dear Brethren, as those who know that the Truth is a seed. Do not speak of it and forget it. Do not tell the Gospel as though it were a stone and would lie in the ground and never spring up. Tell out the Truth as it is in Jesus with the firm conviction that there is life in it and something will come of it.

Be on the alert to see that and you will be the man who will have results. Our estimate of the preciousness of the seed will have much to do with the result of the seed. If I do not esteem thoroughly and heartily the Gospel which I teach, if I do not teach it with all my heart, I cannot expect to see the sheaves. But if, valuing the Gospel, I tell it out to my fellow men as being priceless beyond all cost and tell it out, therefore, with due vivacity and with an earnestness that brings me to tears, I am the man who shall come again rejoicing, bringing my sheaves with me.

I do not know whether I have brought out what I meant, but we have, I think, in our text a full description of the successful worker.  
II. You have in the text, THE WORKER’S SUCCESS. It is said of him, “He shall come again.” What does that mean but that he shall come again to his God? And this the worker should do after he has labored. You sought a blessing—go and tell your God of what you have done and if you have seen a blessing come, give Him thanks. Those men always come back to God with their sheaves who went from God with their seed. Some workers can see souls converted and take the honor to themselves, but never that man who sowed in tears—he has learned his own weakness in the school of bitterness. And now, when he sees results, he comes back again. He comes back to God, for he feels that it is a great wonder that even a single soul should be convicted or converted under such poor words as his.  
Oh, I know some of you have had your sheaves. Dear Brother, beyond a doubt, if you had those sheaves as the result of a holy vehemence in prayer, you will be sure to come back with a holy ardor of thanksgiving and lay those sheaves in their honor and their praise at the foot of God who gave them to you. “He shall doubtless come again.” Does not that mean in the longest and largest sense, he shall come again to Heaven? He did, as it were, go forth from Heaven. His body had not been there, but his soul had. He had communed with God. Heaven was his portion and his heritage, but it was expedient for him to tarry a little while here for the sake of others, and so, in a certain sense he leaves the Heaven of his rest to go into the field of sorrow among the sons of men. But he shall come again.  
Ah, blessed be God, we are not banished by our service. We are kept outside the pearl gate for a little while—thanks be to God for the honor of being permitted thus to be absent from our joys for awhile—but we are not shut out, we are not banished, we shall doubtless come again! Here is your comfort! You go, perhaps, into the mission field. You journey to the remotest parts of the earth to serve God, but you shall come again. There is a straight road to Heaven from the most remote field of service and in this you may rejoice.  
But the text adds, “He shall come again with rejoicing.” What will he rejoice in? Take the whole text and wrap it up together and it seems to me to say that he shall come again rejoicing even in his very tears. I reckon that at the last, when Christian service shall be done and Christian reward shall be rendered, the toils endured in serving God—the disappointment and the racking of heart will all make raw material for everlasting song. Oh, how we shall bless God to think that we were counted worthy to do anything for Christ!  
Was I enlisted in the host that stood the shock of battle? Did the Master suffer me to have a hand upon the standard that waved so proudly aloft amidst the smoke of the battle? Did He suffer me to leap into the ditch, or scale the rampart of the wall among the forlorn hope? Or did He even suffer me to watch by the baggage while the battle was raging afar off? Then am I thankful that He, in any way whatever, permitted me to have a share in the glory of that triumphant conflict! And then, Brethren, as old soldiers show their scars and as the warriors in many conflicts delight to tell of hair-raising escapes in “the imminent breach,” and of dangers grim and ghastly, so shall we rejoice as we return to God to tell of our going forth and of our weeping when we carried the precious seed.  
There is not a single drop of gall which will not turn to honey. There is not, this day, one drop of sweat upon your aching brow but shall crystallize into a pearl for your everlasting crown! Not one pang of anguish or disappointment but shall be transmuted into celestial glory to increase your joy, world without end! But the main rejoicing will be doubtless in their success. O you Sunday school teachers, if you go forth as the text has told you and as I have explained to you, you shall not be without fruits! I have heard many discussions among my Brothers and Sisters, about whether or not every earnest laborer may expect to have fruit.  
I have always inclined to the belief that such is the rule and though there may be exceptions and perhaps some men may be rather a savor of death unto death than of life unto life, yet it seems to me that if I never won souls I would sigh till I did. I would break my heart over them if I could not break their hearts! If they would not be saved and were not saved, I would almost cry with Moses, “Blot out my name out of the Book of Life.” Though I can understand the possibility of an earnest sower never reaping, I cannot understand the possibility of an earnest sower being content not to reap! I cannot comprehend any one of you Christian people trying to win souls and not having results and being satisfied without results!  
I can suppose that you may love the Lord and may have been trying your best unsuccessfully for years, but then I am sure you feel unhappy about it. I can not only suppose that to be the case, but I am thankful that you are unhappy! I hope the unhappiness will increase with you till at last, in the anguish of your spirit, you shall cry, like Rachel, “Give me children or I die! Give me fruits or I cannot live!” Then you will be the very person described in the text—you go forth weeping, bearing seed that is precious to you—and you must have results, you must come again rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you!  
The last point is coming back rejoicing with sheaves. I do not suppose the text means that the reaper is to bring home all his sheaves on his own back, but, as an old expositor says, he comes with the wagons behind him, with the wagons at his heels, bringing his sheaves with him. Yes, they are his sheaves. “How so? All saved souls belong to Christ. They are God’s.” Yes, but for all that they belong to the worker. There is a kind of sacred property which exists and which God acknowledges in the case of men and women who bring souls to Christ. I am persuaded there is no love in this world more pure and crystal, more celestial and enduring, than the love of a convert to the person through whose agency he or she may have been brought to Christ.  
All earthly love has a tinge of the flesh about it, but this is spiritual— this is worthy of immortal spirits—this will therefore endure. While the converts that are brought to Christ are all the Lord’s own, yet they belong, also, to those who brought them in—so God puts it, “bringing his sheaves with him.” And, ah, I like to think of that! If God shall privilege me to bring souls to Him, I shall count them all and say, “Here am I and the children which You have given me.” Oh, it is blessed to give all the glory to Christ! It is a great honor to give all the honor to Him! But you must have the glory first, or you cannot give it to Him! The sheaves must be yours, or evidently you cannot carry them honestly and offer them to Him.  
Souls are saved through God’s Word, yes, but Christ prays for those who shall believe, “through their word,” that is, through the preachers’ word. The Apostle gives much honor to workers, for in one place he speaks of himself as though he were the mother of souls, “Little children for whom I have travailed in birth.” In another place he speaks of himself as though he were a father of souls, as though both relations were centered in the true laborer. Thus does God put high honor upon Christian workers by making the souls, as it were, completely theirs—the sheaves their sheaves. They threw themselves into the work. They made the work their very life. They wept. They cried and pleaded as they sowed.  
And now God does not come in to take away all property in the sheaves, but as they come back, the workers have an interest and a share in all the results of the blessed Gospel and God makes those sheaves

 their sheaves! He gives them honor in the sight of men and angels through Jesus Christ His Son!  
III. And now I have not time, as I ought to have, for the conclusion, which is upon THE GOLDEN LINK OF “DOUBTLESS,” therefore I must just launch rapidly these concise hints. The true worker will be a reaper. I am afraid I have put this in the shape as though I were speaking to ministers, but I am not. I am trying to talk to every Christian here. If you are a true worker, you doubtless will be a reaper. Why? First, because the promise of God says so. “My Word shall not return to Me void: it shall prosper in the thing where I sent it.”  
Secondly, God’s honor in the Gospel requires it. If there is a failure and you have preached the true Gospel rightly, it will be the Gospel that will fail. But God’s attributes are all wrapped up in the Gospel—it is His wisdom and His power. And shall God’s wisdom be nonplussed and God’s power be put back? Again, you must reap because the analogy of Nature assures you of it. The poor peasant whose little stock of corn is all but spent, takes a little wheat, which is very precious to him, and with many tears he drops it into the soil in the wintry months. And God gives him a harvest. In due time, in the mellow autumn days, he gathers in the sheaves, which reward him for his self-denial.  
It shall be so with you. God mocks not the farmer. He appoints the seedtime and He brings round the harvest. As He does not change the ordinances of Nature, so will He not change the ordinances of Divine Grace. Be satisfied with this. Moreover, Christ, the model of the Christian life, assures you of this. He went forth weeping, sowing drops of bloody sweat, sowing with pierced hands and feet that dropped with blood. He went forth sowing living seeds of love and they are springing up today already in the Glory and in the multitudes that are gathered into it. And soon, in the coming and the superior splendor that shall envelop it, the Christ who sowed in tears will reap in joy!  
Even thus it must be with you. And if this is not enough to comfort you, remember those who have gone before you in this service who have proved this fact. Think of those you have known who have not been unsuccessful—when, with hearts broken and bruised, they have spent their life-power in their Lord’s work. Remember Judson and the thousands of Karens that this day sing of the Savior whom he first taught to them. Think of Moffat, in his old age still in the kraals of the Bechuanas, not without glorious seals to his ministry!  
Think of our own missions in Jamaica, of the wonders and trophies of Grace in the South Sea Islands, the multitudes that were turned to Christ during revival seasons in our own land and in the United States, and you have proof that those that know how to weep and sow and who go forth from God to the sowing, shall, beyond a doubt, come again rejoicing with their sheaves! Up, you laborers, sow in hope! Sow broadcast and enlarge your spheres! Up, you desponding ones who are wrapping your cloaks about you and seeking consolation in indolence because you think your toil too desperate! Up, I beseech you, for the harvest comes!  
O miss not your share in the shouting and the rejoicing—but you will so miss it if you miss your part in the weeping and in the sorrowing! Would God I could put zeal into your hearts, but that I cannot. May the Holy Spirit do it and as a band of Christian men, may we be resolved that henceforth, while we live, and until we die, we will with passionate longing—with all the forces of our manhood worked up and strained to the utmost pitch—seek to tell the good news of Jesus Crucified to the sons of men, knowing that our work of faith cannot be in vain in the Lord!  
O you who are not saved at all, I ask you not to work! I ask you not to sow! But come to Christ Jesus! Look to His Cross! One look at Christ will save you! Trust in Him and you shall live. The Lord bless these words for His name’s sake. Amen.

*PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalms 126, 127, 129.*  
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CO-WORKERS WITH GOD  
NO. 2559

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, MARCH 6, 1898.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, JANUARY 25, 1883.

**“Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it: unless the LORD guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so He gives His Beloved sleep.” Psalm 127:1, 2.**

Did you notice, when we were reading this Psalm, that it is entitled, “A Song of Degrees for Solomon”? The title may be either, “for Solomon,” or, “by Solomon.” If it is by Solomon, I can only say that it is worthy to be placed side by side with the Book of Proverbs or Ecclesiastes. It is a Psalm which is very brief and which has the soul of wisdom in it. It is, in fact, a Solomonic Psalm—it is quite after his style of writing. The whole of it might be made into a Proverb and its separate sentences might be cut up into proverbial expressions. It was inspired by the Spirit of God and He may have used for the writing of it no less accomplished an individual than King Solomon, whose wisdom was greater than that of the men of his age. If it is a Psalm, “for Solomon”—which it strikes me it is, then it is none the less admirable in our esteem, for, if Solomon needed to be taught it, certainly we do. If, when David knew that Solomon was to build the house of the Lord, he thought it necessary, before he began the Temple, to remind him that “unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it,” we may depend upon it that as we are less wise than Solomon, we need to have just such a lesson taught us! Let us accept it as from David and let each one of us hear the words of the dying king as he speaks to us as well as to his son and successor.

I intend, as God shall help me, to fetch out three or four lessons from our text which it may be well for us to learn.  
I. The first is WHAT WE MAY NOT EXPECT, namely, that God will build the house without our laboring, that God will guard the city without the watchman’s staying awake, or that He will give us bread without our toiling for it. This principle may be applied to a great many matters.  
And, first, to what we call our ordinary life, though I never like to draw any distinction between one portion of our life and another. It is a part of the Christian religion to sanctify everything so that we worship God in the shop as well as in the meeting house—and we are as reverent about our domestic affairs as about our devotional concerns. But, still, as it is our habit to speak of the ordinary affairs of life, it is necessary to say that in all things to which we put our hand, we are expected to use all available means. We are not allowed to be idle, to sit still and do nothing because we say that we are trusting in Providence. One of the things which Christianity cannot bear is laziness! The Apostle Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, was inspired to pass a very sharp sentence upon them— “This we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat”—a sentence which would exterminate a great number of persons who at the present time seem to flourish! If in business I am not diligent, I cannot expect to prosper. If I wish to be a man of learning, I cannot get it simply by praying for it—I must study, even to the weariness of the flesh. If a man is sick, he may trust in God as much as he wills—that should be his first thing—but let him also use such remedies as God has given if he can discover them, or learn of them from others.  
My grandfather said to me, many years ago, concerning the preparation of a sermon, and I have always remembered his words, “I study my sermon as much as if the work of preaching depended entirely upon myself. And I go into the pulpit relying upon the Spirit of God, knowing that it does not depend upon myself, but upon Him.” For us to do all that we can do is the appointed way in which the blessing comes. We would all think it ridiculous if men left off sowing because they had so much faith in God that they were sure He would not suffer men to starve and would be certain to send a harvest. Suppose the farmer said, “Plowing is for ordinary people. I live by faith, I never plow. Harrowing, fertilizing, sowing—these are all the pitiful shifts of unbelief. I shall do nothing with the land, I shall just wait. I cannot doubt that God can make wheat to grow quite as well as weeds and, if He pleases, He can give me a harvest without my using any of these ordinary means which are only a coverlet for unbelief.”  
Within a year, he would be convinced of his folly! I wish it were as easy to convince all Christians of their folly in thinking that faith means that they are to work no more. “Faith without works is dead.” “Faith works by love.” There is no stronger and more forceful principle for fetching out the energy of a man than his conviction that God is with him. If God works in me to will and to do of His good pleasure, then the natural result is that I must work out what He has worked in. Where God has united means and ends, I would say of them, “What God has joined together, let no man put asunder.” To trust in the means without God is presumption—but to profess to trust in God without the means is only another form of presumption—it will come to the same thing in the end. I am to believe in God and in God, alone, but if I perceive that He works in a certain way, I am to drop into God’s way and to believe that He will work while I am pleading with Him to do so, and seeking to carry out His plan of doing it!  
So, in the ordinary affairs of life, my dear Brothers and Sisters, do not go and put your feet on the fender and sit still, and say, “The Lord will provide,” because if you act so foolishly, very likely He will provide you with a place in the workhouse! If you go up and down the town with no profession, with your hands in your empty pockets and say that you are trusting in God, God will give you the wages that you earn, namely poverty! He will clothe you with rags if you clothe yourself with idleness. If you will not serve Him, you shall find the reward that comes to the man who wastes his Master’s talents by wrapping them in a napkin!

The same thing is true in the great matter of our salvation. Dear Friends, it is quite true that God saves His people. “Salvation is of the Lord” from first to last, but no man is saved apart from his own believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. That faith is God’s gift, but it is man’s act. The Holy Spirit does not believe for us—what would He believe? No man is saved apart from repentance—and repentance is a work of the Spirit of God. But the Spirit of God does not repent—what has He to repent of? It is the man, himself, who must repent and believe. “If you believe not, you shall die in your sins.” “Unless you repent, you shall all likewise perish.” Do not, therefore, any of you, sit still and dream about the Predestination of God! Divine Predestination is most blessedly true—it is the joy of my spirit—but do not turn it into a pillow for your idle head and fancy that blessings will come to you when you are not looking for them. “Faith comes by hearing.” Therefore hear most attentively and reverently the Word of God—and drink it in. And “salvation comes by faith.” Therefore, what you hear of God’s Word, believe and accept simply and with a childlike faith—and so you shall be saved. Do not, I pray you—any of you—fall into the idea that it matters not where you are, or what you do, or how inattentive you are, or how careless you are about the things of God. It does matter! All these things are sins—sins for which you shall be called to account!  
Oh, that the Spirit of God may lead you to adopt quite another line of conduct! Search the Scriptures, says our Lord, “for in them you think you have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Me.” May you often be found upon your knees, for the Lord hears them that cry unto Him! May you be found confessing your sins, for, “whoso confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy”! May you be found believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, for there is no soul lost that casts itself at the foot of Christ’s Cross! Do not, then, misread the text as though, either in common things or in the loftiest matter, we were to do nothing and leave everything to God.  
This also is true, dear Friends, as to the matter of our spiritual growth. We are not to assume that because we are Christians, we shall go on growing in Grace if we use no sort of means whatever. I know persons who stint themselves in their meals—and they are often faint—do you wonder? What shall I say of persons who, on the Sabbath, practice oncea-day Christianity and who never go out to a week-night service? They have not time, they say, yet I hear of their being at various secular entertainments. They stint themselves in their spiritual food and then they say—  
That is a point I long to know, too, for the case is very doubtful! If a man will not feed himself upon the Bread of Heaven, can he expect that he shall grow strong? We see some who neglect private prayer—of course not giving it up altogether—but they have little of it and they are seldom found where the assemblies of God’s people are gathered for prayer. And they say they do not know how it is that they do not enjoy religion! I should think not, dear Friend—you do not have enough of it, for it is with religion as the poem says it is concerning learning—  
*“A little learning is a dangerous thing.  
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring.”*It is often so with religion—a man gets just enough of it to make him miserable! He can no longer be satisfied with the world and he is not satisfied with God—so he is miserable all round. Oh, that you had not only religion enough to make you a miserable sinner, but enough to make you a rejoicing saint! But if we neglect to search the Word and neglect private prayer, and neglect the assemblies of God’s House. If we restrain communion with the Most High, can we wonder if we do not grow? God will undoubtedly build our spiritual house, but we, also, must labor in it— there must be an earnestness, a prayerfulness, a watchfulness, an intensity of desire, a using of all appointed means by which we may be built up in our most holy faith.  
I am certain that this is also true in a fourth matter, namely, in our Christian work, in our trying to bring souls to Christ. We cannot expect to see men converted if we are not earnest in telling them that Truth of God which will save the soul. It is the work of the Spirit to convert sinners—to regenerate must always be the sole work of God—yet the Lord uses us as His instruments. The great honor that God often puts upon instrumentality is very wonderful. Paul speaks of himself as the very mother of those to whom he was the means of conversion—“My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ is formed in you.” Then, in writing to Philemon, he says, of Onesimus, “whom I have begotten in my bonds”—making himself to be, as it were, both father and mother—strong expressions and yet they are warranted, otherwise Paul would not have used them. God uses those who seek to win souls so that, as it were, He puts the very paternity of those souls upon them! It is great condescension that He should do so, but let it teach us this lesson that if God works by means, as He does, He will not have us neglect those means, or we will be found unfit for the Master’s use!  
A Brother complains that there are no conversions under his ministry. Will he ask himself whether he has aimed at conversion? A Sunday school teacher says that she has seen no girls in her class brought to Christ. Has her teaching been such as to tend that way? Has Christ been set forth in His sweet attraction? Has prayer been offered that the girls might come to Christ? Have they been pleaded with? Have they been taught their lost condition? Have they been shown the excellence of Christ as a Savior? You see, if we live in a region of means suited to ends, it is the path of wisdom to find out the means best suited to the desired end—and to use it in dependence upon God! Our text tells us that without God our labor will be in vain. But it does not tell us that we may expect to have our desire in our spiritual service unless we, ourselves, work for the Lord. I believe, my Brothers, that if we preach Christ Crucified with crucified hearts—if we set forth Christ with earnest longing that men may see Him, they will see Him. “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.”  
I believe, teachers in the Sunday school, that if Christ is taught in the classes earnestly and prayerfully, the children will receive Him. Ask those who have tried it—there are many such here—and I am sure that if I were to appeal to their experience, they would tell you that though they may have been, at times, slack in their service, God has never been slack concerning His promise! His Word has not returned unto Him void—it has accomplished what He pleased and prospered in the thing where He sent it. Let there be no listless indifference, no falling back upon the Sovereignty of God as an excuse for half-heartedness! Solomon was too wise a man to write a Psalm that would be meant to encourage idleness! The Holy Spirit would never have led him to write sentences that would bring us into such a state of heart as that.  
II. But now, secondly, our text suggests to us WHAT WE MAY EXPECT. That is, we may expect failure if we attempt the work without God.  
We may expect it and we shall not be disappointed. Going back, again, to our ordinary life, note what the Psalmist says. “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it: unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows.” The pivotal word in the text is the word, “vain.” Three times it rings out as a death-knell to the hope of every man who tries to do without God! Vain is your building a house; vain is your watching a city; vain is your rising up early and sitting up late. “Vanity of vanities,” says the Preacher. All is vanity—utter vanity without God! Success in life, without God, is always vain! A man may be a millionaire without God, but what is that? He may be reported in the newspapers to have died worth a million, when, in fact, he was not worth a brass button! He was put into a coffin, lowered into the grave, but he was worth nothing at all. He could take nothing with him. Even the silver plate on the coffin did not belong to him. If anyone had dug open the grave and taken the plate away, he could not have said, “Leave that alone, it is mine!” “We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out.” So life is a failure if it is only used in amassing gold.  
“Oh,” says one, “but a man may be famous without God.” Yes, in a sense, he may. But have you ever analyzed fame? Of what good is it to a dead man? Of what good is it to a damned man? A man in Hell and his name in every newspaper! A man in the bottomless Pit and they say that he is one of the great men of the age who has left his mark upon the world! But if it is a mark without God, what kind of mark is it? A mark that had better be obliterated as soon as possible! No creature can be a success unless it pleases its Creator. No man can be a success unless he has treasure laid up for immortality, a mansion in Heaven, a place to abide in the islands of the blessed in the land of the hereafter. Without God, he is a complete failure in life.  
It may be that some of you are trying to attain success without God, but you will not succeed and, in the process, you will fritter away your life. What would you think of a man who cut himself up into strips with which to make himself a coat? “That would be a most absurd thing,” you say. Well, but what think you of a man who destroys himself that he may get himself bread, or that he may find a house and clothes for himself? “What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his soul?” That is, supposing he could gain the whole world by bartering his soul for it, what profit would he make? But men do not gain the world by losing their soul—they lose both this world and the next, too! And for what do they lose all this? Why, they “rise up early.” Oh, what would they not give for another half-hour in the morning? They rise up early and they “sit up late,” till they fall asleep at their work. Oh, dear! What mill horses! What worse than slaves! And they, “eat the bread of sorrows.” There is very little bread and, instead of being buttered, it seems to be smeared over with gall. There are some that I know who would not eat bread if they could help it—they grudge the money that it costs to keep body and soul together. And so they are losing this life and they are not getting anything for the life to come. They are throwing all away for some vain hope of becoming rich, that they may be talked of among men! Oh, happy and blessed is the man who has risen above that groveling and who knows that without his God he cannot prosper! He first of all goes to Him to learn what true prosperity is—and then looks to Him to bestow it.

Now, dear Friends, here is a very important and blessed Truth of God which concerns our salvation. What we may expect regarding our salvation is this—if we attempt to obtain salvation apart from God, it will be a failure. Oh, how many there are who are seeking salvation through the works of the Law! They build and they watch. And they rise up early and they sit up late. And they eat the bread of sorrows and, let me tell you, if you are trying to be saved by your good works, you have need to get up early, sit up late, work your fingers to the bone, worry yourselves into your graves and then it will still be all in vain! Let me read to you, again, the beginning of that 126th Psalm, though we had it just now. The man of works rises up early, sits up late and eats the bread of sorrows all in vain.  
But this is what Faith says—“When the Lord turned, again, the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord has done great things for them.” You are trying to see what you can do. But we have found out what the Lord can do! You are fretting and fuming because of what you cannot do. But we are laughing and singing because of what the Lord has done by the redemption accomplished on the Cross of Calvary! I wish you would flee from Moses and get away to Christ and begin to trust and rejoice in Him, for, if you do not, this is what you may expect—if you spend the next half-century in tears and mortification of the body, if you deny yourself and give all your goods to feed the poor, and even give your body to be burned, yet vanity of vanities shall it all be! Without God, all that you can do in the matter of your salvation shall be vain!  
It is just the same with regard to the Christian’s growth in Divine Grace. The Believer must never think that he will naturally and necessarily grow in Grace because he uses the means of Grace. I just now insisted upon the reading of the Scriptures, but that may be a very dry formality unless we look to Got to bless it to us. I spoke of gathering to hear the Word, but that will be a very unprofitable piece of ceremonialism unless our eyes are toward the Lord rather than toward the preacher. I spoke of private prayer, but that may degenerate into a mere form unless we have communion with God in it. Indeed, it is nothing unless God is there! You cannot go an inch in the pilgrimage to Heaven without God! It is not possible for you to overcome a solitary sin, or to produce a single virtue apart from the Holy Spirit. “They labor in vain who build” without God. You may rise up early and sit up late—and be one of the most outspoken professors of religion—but nothing will come of it unless God is in it all.  
And so is it with regard to the work and service of God. O Bothers and Sisters, we may preach, but none of our preaching will raise the spiritually dead unless the Lord is there! We may adopt every kind of expedient and go what length we like in seeking a revival, but it will be a farce and a nullity unless our dependence is upon the Lord alone. Give us a working Church, but let it first be a trusting Church! Let the man be earnest, but first let him be humble. Let him believe in the Gospel being blessed, but let him first believe that it is God, alone, who can bless the Gospel. If not, we shall certainly meet with failure. If we dream for a moment that we can change a heart of stone into flesh, that stony heart will, by its obduracy, teach us a severe lesson! If we even think that one little child can be converted by our tears and prayers, apart from God, we shall be utterly disappointed. Without God, we are nothing!  
III. Now, thirdly, and briefly, let us notice, from the text, WHAT WE SHOULD NOT DO.  
And the first point is that in our ordinary affairs we should not fret, or worry, or grieve. You know how some people act—they forget that God rules all things and that they are taught to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread.” So they are all in a fume, up in the morning far too early, waking everybody up who needed a little extra rest, then toiling hard all day, not really doing much, but fussing over it all, rather than really accomplishing anything. They seem as if they cannot go to bed at night— there is always something more to be done. There is another drawer that needs putting to rights, or something else that must be attended to even at midnight! Then look at the man in business—he does not do half as much as the quiet man who goes calmly about his work. But you would think, from the fuss he makes, that he is going to compete with all the traders in London and that his shop, if he is to live by it, must cut out all the shops that ever existed! If there is a bad debt, oh, he will be ruined!  
I know of some people who seem to make all the affairs of life into a kind of slavery by the way in which they are agitated about them. It is sad to see an immortal soul worrying itself thus about the things of time. Well did the poet say that it resembled—  
*“Ocean into tempest tossed  
To waft a feather or to drown a fly.”*  
Yet this is the way with very many—they forget that God “gives His beloved sleep.” They would be far better in bed, sometimes, when they are sitting up and worrying. If they could just sleep on it and leave the matter with God, it would go on a deal better without them than it does with them. Yet they fancy that if they are not there to hack, drive and scold from morning to night, everything would go amiss. My dear worrying man or woman, pray the Lord to give you a little patience and a great deal of faith—and the Grace to be quiet and leave all in His hands.  
In the matter of the soul’s salvation, a man should be anxious, yet his salvation will never come by his working and running from this one to that and the other. I have known men who have desired to be saved and who have not been satisfied with the preacher they have been accustomed to hear—so they have gone to another. They have not been satisfied with him—so they have gone to still another! They have not been content, perhaps, in one denomination, so they have drifted off to another and, at last, it is highly probable that they have cast anchor with the worst lot of all. Perhaps they have got as far as the Papacy and they think now they have something real—here is an historic church—they can cast anchor there. Yet very soon they are off somewhere else. Possibly they go to the Plymouth Brethren, or to the Irvingites—nobody knows where they may go, but they keep flying about here and there. This is not the way that salvation comes! I can stop just where I am and find that by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, I am saved. “Lord Jesus, I believe. I trust You and I am saved.” That is the way salvation comes—not by all that running about and gadding to and fro! This is our Lord’s declaration—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” That is how, in the Great Commission, He bade us put it and I shall not put it otherwise than He commanded us. “He that believes on the Son has everlasting life.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” But instead of doing that, some must be here and there, and everywhere. Oh, that they would listen to the text! “It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows,” for to those who are in Christ, to those who simply believe on Him, “He gives His beloved sleep.”  
Now, with regard to growing in Divine Grace, I believe that it is much the same. I do not know that I ever looked down my own throat, but there are some Christians who seem to live that way—they will not believe that they are spiritually breathing unless they can see down their own throats! They do not believe that their heart is beating unless they can hear it palpitating. I mean this! There is often such an amount of introspection about Christians that they miss the very essence of true Christian life. They look into themselves instead of looking to Christ alone. You remember that when the face of Moses shone because he had looked at God, we read that, “Moses wished that the skin of his face had not shone.” You go and look in the mirror and you are in hopes that you will see your face shine that way, but it will not. You say, “Would you not have a man look in the mirror?” Of course I would, that he may see the spots on his face. But he cannot remove them by his looking—he must go to the water to wash the spots away. The way to become like Christ is to think about Christ. Some people think so much about their own sanctification that they miss sanctification altogether. They are looking at their own image and admiring it until they are gradually being more and more conformed to their own image! But he who looks away from himself, entirely to Christ, shall go from glory to glory and be transformed into the image of his Master. It is foolish to be always fretting and worrying, and saying, “I am not humble enough, I am not believing enough, I am not this or that.” Go to Christ and rest yourself on Him—and believe that what He has begun to do for you and in you, He will certainly perform and perfect!  
Here comes in, again, our working for the Lord. Beloved Friends, let us work for the Lord without being “cumbered” with much service as Martha was. The Lord Jesus Christ is admirable in His life for the quiet way in which He does everything. He always seems ready. Whatever the occasion is, He is never put about or flurried. He works all day long and He gets weary, but He says nothing about it. It is a sweet way of working for Christ—“to do the next thing,” the next that needs to be done today—not always forecasting all that we are going to do tomorrow and the next day, but calmly and quietly believing that there are so many days in which a man shall be able to walk and to work, and while we have them we will both walk and work in the strength of God! It is a very sweet thing when a man is brought into such a condition that he can work for Christ in Christ’s own quiet way, calmly leaving all his cares at his Savior’s feet.

IV. I will finish up with the description of SOMETHING WHICH I WOULD LIKE TO SEE. When Solomon was building the Temple for the Lord, it was done very quietly. The men had the plan—not one of them had to consider about it—the plan was all before them and when the stones came from the quarries, they did not need any hammering or any altering. They only needed quietly fixing, each stone into the place that was prepared for it. Those who went to work for Solomon on the mountains had one month in Lebanon, and then they had two months at home, so that they were not killed by overwork. I can well believe that while the Temple was building, it was about the noblest form of human labor that ever fell to men’s lot. I should think they began the morning with Psalms—not too early, before the sun was up—but just when they could begin it properly. And they worked well on till evening—not too late, for this was work for God, and God is no tyrant—He does not want His servants to be slaves—and before the sun went down there was an evening hymn and they said, when they went home, “Oh, we have had another blessed day’s work! It has been so pleasant! Another big stone has been hoisted up—we could not have believed that it would move, but we got it into its place all right. We had not to hammer it, or even to tap it with a mallet—it just fitted precisely and we felt so glad, for it is the Lord’s House that is being built. We kept singing all day. All the time the great cranes were lifting the big statues, we kept praising and blessing the Lord as we saw the Temple being built. We never had such work, before, and never enjoyed work like it—it seems like one long blessed holiday.”  
Those who were privileged to work from day to day with all their might yet found every day to be like a Sabbath, for now their ordinary work was work for God. They were not like common workmen who were toiling for the world! Even that by which they earned their daily bread was all for the Lord. So every day went merrily on till they came to the very last day and they saw the top stone raised. And then they looked with the utmost delight upon it and they were the most glad of all the company! When Solomon prayed that wonderful prayer to the great Lord of the House, they felt that they had not labored in vain, for God had blessed them and now He had filled the House with His Presence so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the brightness of the Glory!  
Now, I want all of us to feel that as workers for God—pastor and people, Sunday school teachers and you who teach the Bible classes, you who distribute tracts, you who preach at the street corners, all of you, my beloved fellow helpers—we are doing grand work! You know that it is God’s House that we are building. Under God and with His help, we are building up His Church with stones that He points out to us, helps us to quarry and enables us to bring into their places. And the work goes on so easily, too, if we will but do it according to the Great Architect’s plan. And if we do not get too fussy and busy, and if we do not think that we should knock a corner off here, and alter the shape of a stone there, but will just do it as God would have it done, in His fear, in simple dependence upon Him, confident that it is all right—the great Master-Builder will complete His work! I think that we ought to be the happiest workers who ever lived! It should be a joy to us to do anything for the Lord Jesus. And, oh, when it gets finished, and the top stone is laid, and the Lord descends and fills the House and none of us will be any longer needed, for the priests will not be able to stand and minister by reason of the Glory of the Christ who has filled His Church—oh, then what joy we shall have that ever we were engaged in the work!  
I mean that for you, my dear Sister—do not go on fretting and saying, “I shall have to give up my class. Things do not seem to go well.” I know how you talk—do not speak like that any longer! And you, dear Brother, must not go home to your church in the country and say, “I cannot stir the people. The work does not flourish as I wish it would.” Of course it does not! My work does not prosper as I wish it might. You and I can never go at the pace we would like to go, but can we not be willing to be driven by our Lord and to go at HIS pace? It is quite right to work as if the salvation of all the souls in the world depended upon you, yet, as it does not, you had better throw that burden back upon your Lord and Master! Feel the weight of men’s souls till it crushes you down to Christ’s feet, but do not let it crush you any lower than that—you are not the Savior, you are not to have the Glory of their salvation. Neither, if you have served your Lord faithfully, shall you have the shame of their ruin if they are lost! Rise not up early and sit not up late. I mean, so as to work yourself away—but give yourself up by faith to do all you can do, all that God shall help you to do—and then trust in Him to bless you and He will bless you. God make this discourse a word of comfort to His own people, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

**“Tis a point I long to know, Oft it causes anxious thought. Do I love the Lord or no, Am I His, or am I not?”**

**EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALMS 126. AND 127.**

Psalm 126:1. When the LORD turned, again, the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream. We could hardly believe it! We began to talk incoherently, as men do in their sleep. We were so carried away with joyful rapture that we did not know where we were—“we were like them that dream.”

2 *.*Then was our mouth filled with laughter. We became Issacs, for he was the child of laughter. We laughed as Abraham did, for very joy of faith! Sometimes laughter may become the holiest possible expression. It may be one of the meanest utterances of our nature, but it may also be one of the loftiest. These people not only laughed, but their mouth was filled with laughter! They could not laugh loudly enough. There was no expression of articulate speech that sufficed them at all—“Then was our mouth filled with laughter.”

2 *.*And our tongue with singing. When they did find their tongue, they could not speak, they must sing! They could not have anything so slow as a mere declaration, they must have a Psalm—“Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing.”

2 *.*Then said they among the heathen, The LORD has done great things for them. The heathen could not help seeing that it was the Lord who had delivered Israel. No other people except the Jews ever came back from captivity. The Babylonian tyrant never restored any others to their land, but he did restore these people. And the very heathen said, “It is their God, Jehovah, that has done it.” And what did God’s own people say?

3 *.*The LORD has done great things for us; whereof we are glad. See the difference between the outsider and the insider. The outsider says, “The Lord has done great things for them.” Ah, but they who belong to God say, “The Lord has done great things for us.” Oh, the privilege of being able to say, “for us”! Dear Hearers, can you join with all the saints and say, “The Lord has done great things for us”? This is what happened to God’s people, before, but now they have fallen into another trouble, so hear how they pray.

4 *.*Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the south. “You did it once. Do it again. You made us to live. Make us to live again. We sang, then, O Lord—enable us to sing again, ‘Turn again our captivity.’ As the dry river-beds are suddenly made to be filled with water at the melting of the snow, so come, and fill our hearts, ‘as the streams in the south.’”

5 *.*They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. Take that for certain! Lay it down as a Scripture Proverb. When God sends us a wet time, and we have to sow in the moist, foggy atmosphere—never mind—there are brighter days yet to come. We shall reap amid the sunbeams and carry home our sheaves with joy!

6 *.*He that goes forth and weeps, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him. “He shall doubtless come again with rejoicing.” Now, you disconsolate workers, you who have only a handful of seed, you shall come back with an armful of sheaves! You shall come back rejoicing though you now go forth sorrowing, for the Lord has said it! Therefore be of good courage.

Psalm 127:1-3. Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it: unless the LORD guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows for so He gives His beloved sleep. Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD and the fruit of the womb is a reward. The Psalmist had been speaking about house building and there is the building up of the house in the sense of a family being built up by children. Some people think children an encumbrance, but they are, “a heritage of the Lord,” and they are to be looked upon with gladness. One said, “I have 12 sons,” and his friend answered, “That is exactly Jacob’s number.” “Yes,” said the first speaker, “and I have Jacob’s God to enable me to sustain them.” There is a comfort in that thought—may God grant that none may be troubled by those whom God sends to us for a heritage!

4 *.*As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. In the case of an arrow, you know it all depends which way you shoot it. Mind, therefore, that you direct your children aright. Give them a good start, a true aim from the very first, God helping you, and then they shall fly from you like the arrows of a mighty archer!

5 *.*Happy is the man that has his quiver full of them. That is, when they are like arrows—not when they are gnarled and knotty, like crooked sticks! When they are unwilling to be tutored and trained, then they become a trial and a trouble. But happy is the man who has a quiver full of arrows—the more the merrier of such children as the Psalmist here speaks of.

5 *.*They shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate. When there was any suit at law, these sons of his would be there to plead for him. If there was any fighting to be done, they also would be to the front. It was a dangerous thing to attack a man who had a house full of strong, loyal, loving sons! They would be his defense—they would speak—and speak with very considerable emphasis, too, with his enemies in the gate.

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THE PECULIAR SLEEP OF THE BELOVED  
NO. 12

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, MARCH 4, 1855, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND

**“For so He gives His beloved sleep.”  
Psalm 127:2.**

THE sleep of the body is the gift of God. So said Homer of old, when he described it as descending from the clouds and resting on the tents of the warriors around old Troy. And so sang Virgil, when he spoke of Palinurus falling asleep upon the prow of the ship. Sleep is the gift of God. We think that we lay our heads upon our pillows and compose our bodies in a peaceful posture and that, therefore, we naturally and necessarily sleep. But it is not so. Sleep is the gift of God and not a man would close his eyes did not God put His fingers on his eyelids—did not the Almighty send a soft and balmy influence over his frame which lulled his thoughts into quiescence, making him enter into that blissful state of rest which we call sleep. True, there are some drugs and narcotics whereby men can poison themselves well near to death and then call it sleep. But the sleep of the healthy body is the gift of God. He bestows it, He rocks the cradle for us every night. He draws the curtain of darkness. He bids the sun shut up his burning eyes and then He comes and says, “Sleep, sleep My child. I give you sleep.” Have you not known what it is at times to lie upon your bed and strive to slumber? And as it is said of Darius, so might it be said of you—“The king sent for his musicians, but his sleep went from him.” You have attempted it, but you could not do it. It is beyond your power to procure a healthy repose. You imagine if you fix your mind upon a certain subject until it shall engross your attention you will then sleep. But you find yourself unable to do so. Ten thousand things drive through your brain as if the whole earth were agitated before you. You see all things you ever beheld dancing in a wild phantasmagoria before your eyes. You close your eyes, but still you see. And there are things in your ears and head and brain which will not let you sleep. It is God, alone, who alike seals up the sea boy’s eyes upon the giddy mast and gives the monarch rest—for with all appliances and means to boot— he could not rest without the aid of God. It is God who steeps the mind in oblivion and bids us slumber, that our bodies may be refreshed, so that for tomorrow’s toil we may rise recruited and strengthened.

O my Friends, how thankful should we be for sleep! Sleep is the best physician that I know of. Sleep has healed more pains of wearied bones than the most eminent physicians upon earth. It is the best medicine— the choicest thing of all the names which are written in all the lists of pharmacy. There is nothing like sleep! What a mercy it is that it belongs alike to all! God does not make sleep the gift of the rich man. He does not give it merely to the noble, or the rich, so that they can keep it as a peculiar luxury for themselves. He bestows it upon all. Yes, if there is a difference, the sleep of the laboring man is sweet, whether he eats little or much. He who toils, sleeps all the sounder for his toil. While luxurious effeminacy cannot rest, tossing itself from side to side upon a bed of soft down, the hard-working laborer, with his strong and powerful limbs worn out and tired, throws himself upon his hard couch and sleeps—and waking, thanks God that he has been refreshed! You know not, my Friends, how much you owe to God, that He gives you rest at night. If you had sleepless nights, you would then value the blessing. If for weeks you lay tossing on your weary bed, you then would thank God for your favor. And as it is the gift of God, it is a gift most precious—one that cannot be valued until it is taken away. Yes, even then we cannot appreciate it as we ought!

The Psalmist says there are some men who deny themselves sleep. For purposes of gain, or ambition, they rise up early and sit up late. Some of us who are here present may have been guilty of the same thing. We have risen early in the morning that we might turn over the ponderous volume, in order to acquire knowledge. We have sat at night until our burned-out lamp has chided us and told us that the sun was rising— while our eyes have ached, our brain has throbbed, our heart has palpitated. We have been weary and worn out. We have risen up early and sat up late and have in that way come to eat the bread of sorrow. Many of you business men are toiling in that style. We do not condemn you for it. We do not forbid rising up early and sitting up late. But we remind you of this text—“It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows—for so He gives His beloved sleep.” And it is of this sleep—that God gives to His beloved—that we mean to speak this morning, as God shall help us—a sleep peculiar to the children of God—a sleep which He gives to “His beloved.” Sleep is sometimes used in a bad sense in the Word of God, to express the condition of carnal and worldly men. Some men have the sleep of carnal ease and sloth—of whom Solomon tells us they are unwise sons that slumber in the harvest, causing shame, so that when the harvest is spent and the summer is ended, they are not saved. Sleep often expresses a state of sloth, of deadness, of indifference in which all ungodly men are found, according to the words, “It is time for us to awake out of sleep.” “Let us not sleep as do others, but let us who are of the day be sober.” There are many who are sleeping the sluggard’s sleep, who are resting upon the bed of sloth. But an awful waking shall it be to them when they shall find that the time of their probation has been wasted. That the golden sands of their life have dropped unheeded from the hourglass. And that they have come into that world where there are no acts of pardon passed, no hope, no refuge, no salvation! In other places you find sleep used as the figure of carnal security in which so many are found. Look at Saul, lying asleep in fleshly security—not like David, when he said, “I will lay me down and sleep, for You, Lord, make me to dwell in safety.” Abner lay there and all the troops lay around him, but Abner slept. Sleep on, Saul, sleep on! But there is an Abishai standing at your pillow and with a spear in his hand he says, “Let me smite him even to the earth at once.” Still he sleeps. He knows it not. Such are many of you, sleeping in jeopardy of your soul. Satan is standing, the Law is ready, vengeance is eager and all are saying, “Shall I smite him? I will smite him this once and he shall never wake again.” Christ says, “Stay, Vengeance, stay.” Lo, the spear is even now quivering—“Stay, spare him yet another year in the hope that he may yet wake from the long sleep of his sin.” Like Sisera, I tell you, Sinner, you are sleeping in the tent of the Destroyer! You may have eaten butter and honey out of a lordly dish, but you are sleeping on the doorstep of Hell! Even now the enemy is lifting up the hammer and the nail to smite you through your temples and fasten you to the earth, that there you may lie forever in the death of everlasting torment—if it may be called a death.

Then there is also mentioned in Scripture a sleep of lust, like that which Samson had when he lost his locks and such sleep as many have when they indulge in sin and wake to find themselves stripped, lost and ruined. There is also the sleep of negligence such as the virgins had, when it is said, “they all slumbered and slept.” And the sleep of sorrow, which overcame Peter, James and John. But none of these are the gifts of God. They are incident to the frailty of our nature. They come upon us because we are fallen men. They creep over us because we are the sons of a lost and ruined parent. These sleeps are not the benisons of God. Nor does He bestow them on His beloved.

We now come to tell you what those sleeps are, which He does bestow. I. First, there is a miraculous sleep which God has sometimes given to His beloved—which He does not NOW grant. Into that kind of miraculous sleep, or rather trance, fell Adam when he slept sorrowfully and alone. But when he awoke he was no more so, for God had given him that best gift which He had then bestowed on man. The same sleep Abram had

when it is said that a deep sleep came on him. He laid down and saw a smoking furnace and a burning lamp, while a voice said to him, “Fear not, Abram. I am your Shield and your exceeding great Reward.” Such a hallowed sleep also was that of Jacob, when, with a stone for his pillow, the hedges for his curtains, the heavens for his canopy, the winds for his music and the beasts for his servants, he laid down and slumbered. Dreaming, he saw a ladder set upon the earth, the top of which reached to Heaven. The angels of God were ascending and descending upon it. Such a sleep had Joseph when he dreamed that the other sheaves made obeisance to his sheaf and that the sun, moon and seven stars were subject unto him.

So oftentimes did David rest, when his sleep was sweet unto him, as we have just read. And such a sleep was that of Daniel when he said, “I was asleep upon my face and behold the Lord said unto me, Arise and stand upon your feet.” And such, moreover, was the sleep of the reputed father of our blessed Lord, when in a vision of the night an angel said unto him, “Arise, Joseph, and take the young Child and His mother and flee into Egypt, for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him.” These are miraculous slumbers. God’s angel has touched His servants with the magic wand of sleep and they have slept, not simply as we do, but slept a wondrous sleep! They have dived into the tenfold depths of slumber, they have plunged into a sea of sleep where they have seen the invisible, talked with the unknown and heard mystic and wondrous sounds—and when they have awakened, they have said, “What a sleep! Surely, my sleep was sweet unto me.” “So He gives His beloved sleep.”

But, nowadays, we do not have such sleeps as these. Many persons dream very wonderful things but most people dream nonsense. Some persons put faith in dreams—and, certainly God does warn us in dreams and visions even now. I am sure He does. There is not a man but can mention one or more instances of a warning, or a benefit, he has received in a dream. But we never trust dreams. We remember what Rowland Hill said to a lady, who knew she was a child of God because she dreamed such-and-such a thing—“Never mind, Ma’am, what you did when you were asleep. Let us see what you will do when you are awake!” That is my opinion of dreams. I never will believe a man to be a Christian merely because he has dreamed himself one. For a dreamy religion will make a man a dreamer all his life—and such dreamers will have an awful waking at last, if that is all they have to trust to!

II. He gives His beloved, in the second place, the sleep of a quiet conscience. I think most of you saw that splendid picture in the Exhibition of the Royal Academy—the Sleep of Argyle—where he lay slumbering on the very morning before his execution. You saw some noblemen standing there, looking at him, almost with compunction. The jailer is there, with his keys rattling—but positively the man sleeps, though tomorrow morning his head shall be severed from his body and a man shall hold it up and say, “This was the head of a traitor.” He slept because he had a quiet conscience—for he had done no wrong. Then look at Peter. Did you ever notice that remarkable passage where it is said that Herod intended to bring out Peter on the morrow, but, behold, as Peter was sleeping between two guards, the angel smote him? Sleeping between two guards, when on the morrow he was to be crucified or slain! He cared not, for his heart was clear. He had committed no evil. He could say, “If it is right to serve God or man, judge you.” And, therefore, he laid down and slept. O Sirs! Do you know what the sleep of a quiet conscience is? Have you ever stood out and been the butt of calumny—pelted by all men? The object of scorn—the laugh, the song of the drunkard? And have you known what it is, after all, to sleep, as if you cared for nothing because your heart was pure? Ah, you who are in debt! You who are dishonest—you who love not God and love not Christ—I wonder you can sleep, for sin does put pricking thorns in the pillow. Sin puts a dagger in a man’s bed so that whichever way he turns it pricks him! But a quiet conscience is the sweetest music that can fill the soul to sleep. The demon of restlessness does not come to that man’s bed who has a quiet conscience—a conscience right with God—who can sing—

*“With the world, myself and Thee,  
I, before I sleep, at peace shall be.”*

“So He gives His beloved sleep.”  
But let me tell you who have no knowledge of your election in Christ  
Jesus, no trust in the ransom of a Savior’s blood—you who have never  
been called by the Holy Spirit. You who never were regenerated and  
born-again—let me tell you that you do not know this slumber. You may  
say your conscience is quiet. You may say you do no man any wrong and  
that you believe at the bar of God you shall have little to account for.  
But, Sirs, you know you have sinned! And your virtues cannot atone for  
your vices. You know that the soul that sins, if it sins but once, must die!  
If the picture has a single flaw, it is not a perfect one. If you have sinned  
but once, you shall be dammed for it, unless you have something to take  
away that one sin. You do not know this sleep, but the Christian does—  
for all his sins were numbered on the “scapegoat’s head of old.” Christ  
has died for all his sins, however great or enormous and there is not now  
a sin written against him in the Book of God. “I, even I,” says God, “am  
He that blots out your transgressions for My name’s sake and I will not  
remember your sins.” Now you may sleep. For “so He gives His beloved  
sleep.”  
III. Again—there is the sleep of contentment which the Christian enjoys. How few people in this world are satisfied. No man ever needs fear  
offering a reward of a thousand pounds to a contented man! For if anyone came to claim the reward, he would of course prove his discontent.  
We are all in a measure, I suspect, dissatisfied with our lot. The great  
majority of mankind are always on the wing. They never settle, they never light on any tree to build their nest—they are always flittering from  
one to the other. This tree is not green enough, that one is not high enough, this one is not beautiful enough, that one is not picturesque enough. So they are always on the wing and never build a peaceful nest at all. The Christian builds his nest. And as the noble Luther said, “Like yon little bird upon the tree, he has fed himself tonight—he knows not where his breakfast is tomorrow. He sits there while the winds rock the tree—he shuts his eyes, puts his head under his wing and sleeps. And when he awakes in the morning, sings—  
*‘Mortals cease from toil and sorrow—  
God provides for the morrow.’”*  
How few there are who have that blessed contentment—who can say, “I need nothing else, I need but little here below—yes, I long for nothing more—I am satisfied—I am content.” You sung a beautiful hymn just now, but I suspect that many of you had no right to it, because you did not feel it—  
“*With Your will I leave the rest.  
Grant me but this one request.  
Both in life and death to prove  
Tokens of Your special love.”*  
Could you say there was nothing you needed on earth, save Jesus?  
Did you mean that you are perfectly content—that you had the sleep of  
contentment? Ah, no! You, who are apprentices, are sighing till you shall  
be journeymen. You who are journeymen, are groaning to be masters.  
Masters are longing till they shall retire from business and when they  
have retired, they are longing that all their children shall be settled in  
life. Man always looks for a yet beyond—he is a mariner who never gets  
to port—an arrow which never reaches the target! Ah, the Christian has  
sleep. One night I could not rest and in the wild wanderings of my  
thoughts I met this text and communed with it—“So He gives His beloved  
sleep.” In my reverie, as I was on the border of the land of dreams, I  
thought I was in a castle. Around its massive walls there ran a deep  
moat. Watchmen paced the walls both day and night. It was a fine old  
fortress, bidding defiance to the foe. But I was not happy in it. I thought I  
lay upon a couch—and scarcely had I closed my eyes, before a trumpet  
blew, “To arms! To arms!” And when the danger was over, I lay down  
again. “To arms! To arms!” once more resounded and again I started up.  
Never could I rest. I thought I had my armor on and moved about perpetually clad in mail, rushing each hour to the castle top, awakened by  
some fresh alarm! At one time a foe was coming from the west. At another, from the east. I thought I had a treasure somewhere down in some  
deep part of the castle and all my care was to guard it. I dreaded, I  
feared, I trembled lest it should be taken from me! I awoke and I thought  
I would not live in such a tower as that for all its grandeur. It was the  
Castle of Discontent, the Castle of Ambition in which man never rests. It  
is always, “To arms! To arms! To arms!” There is a foe here or a foe there. His dear-loved treasure must be guarded. Sleep never crossed the drawbridge of the Castle of Discontent. Then I thought I would supplant it by another reverie. I was in a cottage. It was in what poets call a beautiful and pleasant place but I cared not for that. I had no treasure in the world, save one sparkling jewel on my breast. And I thought I put my hand on that and went to sleep, nor did I wake till morning light. That treasure was a quiet conscience and the love of God—“the peace that passes all understanding.” I slept because I slept in the House of Content, satisfied with what I had. Go, you overreaching misers! Go, you grasping ambitious men! I envy not your life of inquietude. The sleep of statesmen is often broken. The dream of the miser is always evil. The sleep of the man who loves gain is never hearty, but God “gives,” by con  
tentment, “His beloved sleep.”  
IV. Once more—God gives His beloved the sleep of quietness of soul as  
to the future. O that dark future! That future! That future! The present  
may be well but ah, the next wind may wither all the flowers and where  
shall I be? Clutch your gold, miser, for “riches make to themselves wings  
and flee away.” Hug that babe to your breast, mother, for the rough hand  
of death may rob you of it. Look at your fame and wonder at it, O you  
man of ambition! But one slight report shall wound you to the heart and  
you shall sink as low as ever you have been lifted high by the voices of  
the multitude. The future! All persons have need to dread the future, except the Christian. God gives to His beloved a happy sleep with regard to  
the events of coming time—  
*“What may be my future lot,  
High or low concerns me not;  
This does set my heart at rest,  
What my God appoints is best.”*  
Whether I am to live or die is no matter to me. Whether I am to be the  
“offspring of all things,” or “the man whom the king delights to honor,”  
matters not to me. All alike is provided by my Father if He does but give  
it. “So He gives His beloved sleep.”  
How many of you have arrived at that happy point that you have no  
wish of your own at all? It is a sweet thing to have but one wish, but it is  
a better thing to have no wish at all—to be all lost in the present enjoyment of Christ and the future anticipation of the vision of His face! O my  
Soul! What would the future be to you if you had not Christ? If it is a bitter and a dark future, what matters it, so long as Christ your Lord sanctifies it and the Holy Spirit still gives you courage energy and strength? It  
is a blessed thing to be able to say with Madame Guyon—  
*“To me ‘tis equal, whether love ordained, My life or death, appoint me pain or ease. My soul perceives no real ill in pain  
In ease or health, no real good she sees.  
One good she covets and that good alone, To choose Your will, from selfish bias free, And to prefer a cottage to a throne,  
And grief to comfort, if it pleases Thee.  
That we should bear our cross is Your command— Die to the world and live to sin no more,  
Suffer unmoved beneath the rudest hand, As pleased when shipwrecked, as when safe on shore.”*It is a happy condition to attain. “So He gives His beloved sleep.” Ah, if you have a self-will in your hearts, pray to God to uproot it! Have you self-love? Beseech the Holy Spirit to turn it out. For if you will always will to do as God wills, you must be happy. I have heard of some good old woman in a cottage, who had nothing but a piece of bread and a little water. Lifting up her hands, she said, as a blessing, “What? All this and Christ, too?” It is “all this,” compared with what we deserve. And I have read of someone dying, who was asked if he wished to live or die and he said, “I have no wish at all about it.” “But if you might wish, which would you choose?” “I would not choose at all.” “But if God bade you choose?” “I would beg God to choose for me, for I should not know which to take.” Happy state! Happy state! To be perfectly content—

*“To lie passive in His hands,  
And know no will but His.”*  
“So He gives His beloved sleep.”  
V. In the fifth place—there is the sleep of security. Solomon slept with  
armed men round his bed and thus slumbered securely. But Solomon’s  
father slept one night on the bare ground—not in a palace—with no moat  
round his castle wall—and he slept quite as safely as his son, for David  
said, “I laid me down and slept and I awaked, for the Lord sustained me.”  
Now, some persons never feel secure in this world at all. I query whether  
one half of my hearers feel themselves so. Suppose I burst out in a moment and sing this—  
*“I to the end shall endure,  
As sure as the earnest is given;  
More happy but not more secure,  
Are the glorified spirits in Heaven,”*  
you would say, that is too high a doctrine. And I would reply, very likely  
it is for you, but it is the Truth of God and it is sweet Doctrine for me. I  
love to know that if I am predestinated according to the foreknowledge of  
God the Father, I must be saved if I was purchased by His Son’s blood! I  
cannot be lost, for it would be impossible for Jesus Christ to lose one  
whom He has redeemed, otherwise He would be dissatisfied with His labors. I know that where He has begun the good work He will carry it on. I  
never fear that I shall fall away, or be lost. My only fear is lest I should  
not have been right at first. But, provided I am right, if I am really a child  
of God, I might believe that the sun would be smitten with madness and  
go reeling through the universe like a drunken man before I may perish! I might believe that the stars would run from their courses and instead of marching with their measured steps, as now they do, whirl on in wild courses like the dance of Bacchanals! I could even conceive that this great universe might all subside in God, “even as a moment’s foam subsides again upon the wave that bears it.” But neither reason, heresy, logic, eloquence, nor a conclave of divines shall make me pay a moment’s attention to the vile suggestion that a child of God may ever perish!  
Hence I tread this earth with confidence.  
Arguing a little while ago with an Arminian, he said, “Sir you ought to  
be a happy man, for if what you say is true, why you are as secure of being in Heaven as if you were there already!” I said, “Yes, I know it.” “Then  
you ought to live above cares and tribulations and sing happily from  
morning to night.” I said, “So I ought and so I will, God helping me.” This  
is security—“He gives His beloved sleep.” To know that if I died I should  
enter Heaven—to be as sure as I am of my own existence that God, having loved me with an everlasting love and He, being Immutable—will never hate me if He has once loved me! To know that I must enter the Kingdom of Glory—is not this enough to make all burdens light and give me  
the hind’s feet wherewith I may stand upon my high places? Happy state  
of security! “So He gives His beloved sleep.”  
And there is a sleep, my dear Friends, of security which is enjoyed on  
earth even in the midst of the greatest troubles. Do you remember that  
passage in the book of Ezekiel where it is said, “They shall dwell securely  
in the wilderness and sleep in the woods”? A strange place to sleep! “In  
the woods.” There is a wolf over yonder. There is a tiger in the jungle, an  
eagle is soaring in the air. A horde of robbers dwell in the dark forest.  
“Never mind,” says the child of God—  
*“He that has made his refuge God,  
Shall find a most secure abode!  
Shall walk all day beneath His shade,  
And there at night shall rest his head.”*  
I have often admired Martin Luther and wondered at his composure.  
When all men spoke so ill of him, what did he say? Turn to that Psalm—  
“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble;  
therefore we will not fear, though the earth be removed and though the  
mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.” In a far inferior manner I  
have been called to stand up in the position of Martin Luther and have  
been made the butt of slander, a mark for laughter and scorn. But it has  
not broken my spirit, yet, nor will it, by His Grace, while I am enabled to  
enjoy that latent state of—“So He gives His beloved sleep”! But thus far I  
beg to inform all those who choose to slander or speak ill of me that they  
are very welcome to do so till they are tired of it. My motto is cedo nulli—I  
yield to none. I have not courted any man’s love. I asked no man to attend my ministry. I preach what I like and when I like and as I like. Oh, happy state—to be bold, though downcast and distressed—to go and bend my knees and tell my Father all and then to come down from my chamber and say—  
**“If on my face, for Your dear name,  
Shame and reproach shall be,  
I’ll hail reproach and welcome shame,  
For You’ll remember me.”**  
VI. The last sleep God gives His beloved, is the sleep of a happy dismission. I have stood by the graves of many servants of the Lord. I have buried some of the excellent of the earth. And when I bid farewell to my Brother down below, there slumbering in his coffin, I usually commence my speech with those words, “So He gives His beloved sleep.” Dear servants of Jesus! There I see them! What can I say of them, but that “so He gives His beloved sleep”? Oh, happy sleep! This world is a state of tossing to and fro. But in that grave they rest. No sorrows there. No sighs. No groans to mingle with the songs that warble from immortal tongues. Well may I address the dead thus—“My Brother, oftentimes have you fought the battles of this world. You have had your cares, your trials and your troubles. But now you are gone—not to worlds unknown but to yonder land of light and glory. Sleep on, Brother! Your soul sleeps not, for you are in Heaven! But your body sleeps. Death has laid you in your last couch. It may be cold, but it is sanctified. It may be damp, but it is safe. And on the Resurrection Morning, when the archangel shall set his trumpet to his mouth, you shall rise! “Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord—yes, says the Spirit, for they rest from their labors and their works do follow them.” “Sleep on in your grave, my Brother, for you shall rise to Glory.” “So He gives His beloved sleep.” Some of you fear to die and have good reason to do so, for death for you would be the beginning of sorrows. And as it approaches, you might hear the voice of the angel of the Apocalypse—“One woe is past, but behold two woes more are to come.” If, Sirs, you were to die unprepared and unconverted and unsaved, “There remains nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation.” I need not speak like a Boanerges, for it is to you a well known Truth that without God, without Christ, “strangers from the commonwealth of Israel,” your portion must be among the damned—the fiends—the tortured—the shrieking ghosts—the wandering souls who find no rest—  
*“On waves of burning brimstone tossed,  
Forever, O forever lost!”*  
“The wrath to come!” “The wrath to come!” “The wrath to come!” But, beloved Christian Brothers and Sisters, why do you fear to die?  
Come let me take your hand—  
*“To you and me by Grace ‘tis given  
To know the Savior’s precious name!  
And shortly we shall meet in Heaven  
Our end, our hope, our way the same.”*  
Do you know that Heaven is just across that narrow stream? Are you afraid to plunge in and swim across? Do you fear to be drowned? I feel the bottom—it is good. Do you think you shall sink? Hear the voice of the Spirit—“Fear not, I am with you, be not dismayed, I am your God—when you pass through the river, I will be with you and the floods shall not overflow you.” Death is the gate of endless joys and do you dread to enter there? What? Fear to be emancipated from corruption? Oh, say not so,  
but rather gladly lay down and sleep in Jesus and be blessed. I have finished expounding my subject. There is only one question I  
want to ask of you before you pass out of those doors. Do you seriously  
and solemnly believe that you belong to the “beloved” here mentioned? I  
may be impertinent in asking such a question. I have been accused of  
that before now and I have never denied it. I rather take the credit of it  
than not. But seriously and solemnly I ask you—Do you know yourselves  
to be among the beloved? And if it happens that you need a test, allow  
me to give you three tests, very briefly and I have done. It has been said  
that there are three kinds of preachers—doctrinal preachers, experimental preachers and practical preachers. Now I think there are three things  
that make up a Christian—true Doctrine, real experience and good practice.  
Now, then, as to your Doctrine. You may tell whether you are the  
Lord’s beloved partly by that. Some think it matters not what a man believes. Excuse me—the Truth of God IS ALWAYS precious and the least  
atom of the Truth of God is worth searching out! Nowadays the sects do  
not clash so much as they did. Perhaps that is good, but there is one evil  
about it. People do not read their Bibles as much as they did. They think  
we are all right. Now I believe we may be all right in the main, but we  
cannot be all right where we contradict one another! And it becomes  
every man to search the Bible to see which is right. I am not afraid to  
submit my Calvinism, or my Doctrine of Believer’s Baptism, to the  
searching of the Bible. A learned lord, an infidel, once said to Whitfield,  
“Sir, I am an infidel, I do not believe the Bible, but if the Bible is true,  
you are right and your Arminian opponents are wrong. If the Bible is the  
Word of God, the Doctrines of Grace are true.” He added that if any man  
would grant him the Bible to be the Truth, he would challenge him to  
disprove Calvinism, the Doctrines of original sin, election, effectual calling, final perseverance and all those great Truths of God which are called  
Calvinism—though Calvin was not the author of them, but simply an  
able writer and preacher upon the subject! These are, I believe, the essential Doctrines of the Gospel that is in Jesus Christ. Now, I do not ask

you whether you believe all this—it is possible you may not—but I believe  
you will before you enter Heaven. I am persuaded, that as God may have washed your hearts, He will wash your brains before you enter Heaven! He will make you right in your doctrines. But I must enquire whether you read your Bibles. I am not finding fault with you, this morning, for differing from me. I may be wrong—but I want to know whether you search the Scriptures to find what is Truth. And if you are not a reader of the Bible, if you take Doctrines second-hand, if you go to Chapel and say, “I do not like that,” what matters your not liking it provided it is in the Bible? Is it Biblical Truth, or is it not? If it is God’s Truth let us have it exalted. It may not suit you, but let me remind you that the Truth that is in Jesus never was palatable to carnal men and I believe never will be. The reason you love it not is because it cuts too much at your pride. It  
lets you down too low. Search yourselves, then, in Doctrine. Then take care that you remember the experimental test. I am afraid  
there is very little experimental religion among us—but where there is  
true Doctrine, there ought always to be a vital experience. Sirs, try yourselves by the experimental test! Have you ever had an experience of your  
wretchedness, of your depravity, your inability, your death in sin? Have  
you ever felt life in Christ, an experience of the light of God’s Countenance, of wrestling with corruption? Have you had a Grace-given Holy Spirit-implanted experience of a communion with Christ? If so, then you are  
right on the experimental test.  
And, to conclude, take care of the practical test. “Faith without works  
is dead, being alone.” He that walks in sin is a child of the devil and he  
that walks in righteousness is a child of light. Do not think because you  
believe the right Doctrines, therefore you are right. There are many who  
believe right, act wrong and they perish. “Be not deceived. God is not  
mocked, whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap.”  
I have done. Now let me beseech you by the frailty of your own lives—  
by the shortness of time—by the dreadful realities of eternity—by the  
sins you have committed—by the pardon that you need—by the blood  
and wounds of Jesus—by His Second Coming to judge the world in righteousness—by the glories of Heaven—by the awful horrors of Hell—by  
time—by eternity—by all that is good—by all that is sacred—let me beg of  
you, as you love your own souls, to search and see whether you are  
among the beloved, to whom He gives sleep. God bless you.

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #2574 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

“PERSECUTED, BUT NOT FORSAKEN” NO. 2574

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JUNE 12, 1898.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 8, 1883.

**“Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth. Let Israel now say: many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: yet they have not prevailed against me. The plowers plowed upon my back: they made**

**long their furrows. The Lord is righteous: He has cut asunder the cords of the wicked. Let them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion. Let them be as the grass upon the housetops, which withers before it grows up: which the mower fills not his hand; nor he that binds sheaves his arms. Neither do they which go by say, The blessing of the LORD be upon you: we bless you in the name of the LORD.”  
Psalm 129.**

You see, dear Friends, the Psalm speaks of two sorts of people—there is Israel and there are those that hate Zion. The first three verses are dedicated to God’s people. The last five speak of those who are not God’s people, but are the haters of them. From the very first, there have been two seeds in the world. The first man that was born—Cain, was of the seed of the serpent, but the second was, by the Grace of God, of the seed of the woman. And so early, when those two boys had but just developed into manhood, he that was born by Grace served his God and brought a lamb as his sacrifice. But he that was born after the flesh—the firstborn of man—became his brother’s murderer. Thus, in the very first household that ever existed, there was a sharp line of demarcation between the man of faith and the man of sense—the man that lived unto God and the man that lived after his own passions. Always and everywhere since that day there have been the same two characters and, albeit there is a large number of persons about whom you or I may not be able to give any decision, for they seem as if they stood between the two! Yet in the sight of God there is a line, narrow, but most sure, which divides the living from the dead—the believing from the unbelieving—the men that fear God from them that fear Him not.

And still, right down the ages, that Word that was spoken to the serpent in the Garden of Eden stands true—“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed.” There are the believing people of God—His own elect brought out from among men, and there is the world that lies in the Wicked One. To one of these two classes we all belong—there are really no neutrals—it is not possible that there should be. There is no borderland between life and death—a man is either alive by the quickening of the Spirit, or he remains dead in trespasses and sins.

I am going to speak of each of these two classes that are mentioned in my text. So, first, let us notice the description given of God’s own people. The first three verses of the Psalm may be summed up thus—Israel persecuted, but not forsaken. When I have spoken on that theme, I shall hope to say something about the wicked flourishing, but perishing. Those two words—flourishing, perishing—describe the condition of those that hate Zion and that hate the children of Zion. Before I plunge into the text, however, let me give you a few sentences by way of introduction.

The life of the Lord Jesus Christ is the picture of the life of His people. “As He was,” says Paul, “so are we, also, in this world.” This is so remarkably true that, in the Psalms we sometimes can hardly tell whether the writer is describing himself or the Lord Jesus, because, as is the Head, so are the members, and there is a growing likeness which is often spoken of in Scripture as if these two were one, as indeed, in the highest sense, they are. If you read this Psalm carefully, you can see Christ in it. Jesus could truly say, “Many a time have they afflicted Me from My youth: yet they have not prevailed against Me.” Herod sought the young Child’s life to destroy it. Satan seemed to stir Hell, itself, to seek the destruction of the Infant Jesus. “The plowers plowed upon My back: they made long their furrows.” How true was that of our Divine Master—when He was in His agony in the garden, the furrows were plainly visible! When He was brought before Herod, and before Pilate, and was scourged till He was covered with wounds—and when He died and they took down that blessed but mangled body—how deep were the furrows!

Now the sufferings of Christ, of which I spoke to you last Sunday night

[See Sermon #2573, Volume 44— Unparalleled Suffering—read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] are, in their measure, repeated in His people—we are made to have fellowship with Him in His sufferings. Shall the disciple be above his Master? Shall the servant be above his Lord? If they have persecuted Him, they will also persecute us! He bids us look for such treatment as this. Do not, therefore, expect rest where Christ had none, or look to wear a crown of gold where Christ wore a crown of thorns.

My next observation is that the history of God’s people, Israel, is also, in type, a history of His Church. Truly, the sins of Israel are far too often repeated in Believers, but the woes and griefs of Israel, and their deliverance out of them, are the means of comfort to many of God’s saints. See how the Israelites were afflicted from their youth, when they were but a little nation and went down into Egypt. How hard they had to work in the brick-kilns! With what enmity did Pharaoh look upon them! How cruelly and craftily he sought to compass the destruction of the nation by drowning the male children in the Nile! He used his wit and his power every way possible to destroy the chosen people—but the Lord preserved His own. Then, in the day of Israel’s youth, when she went into the wilderness, she was afflicted. “I remember you,” says God, “the kindness of your youth, the love of your espousals, when you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.” But in the wilderness she had her trials and when she came to the promised land, her trials did but begin again. Scarcely was she delivered from the Canaanites before she fell prey to the Philistines! And the Philistines were hardly overcome before we hear of the Syrians, the Edomites, the Moabites—and then of the Assyrians and the Babylonians who, at last, carried away captive the people of God. That nation, Israel, to this day may say, “Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: but they have not prevailed against me.”

Now one more remark. I have already reminded you that Christ’s life is the picture of His people’s life and that the history of Israel is the picture of His Church. Now notice how true it is that the Church, from her very outset, has always been afflicted—first by Herod, when he sought to slay the Apostles, and did murder James. Next afflicted by the Jews and driven from city to city. Then afflicted by Saul of Tarsus who breathed out threats and slaughter against the Church of Christ from her youth. Then broke out the great Pagan persecution. Your knowledge of history, I suppose, tells you how the emperors of Rome used the whole of their force to crush the Christian Church, yet they prevailed not against her! When the Roman emperors had done their worst, and done it in vain, the Church of Christ was turned into an established church by patronage— and from that moment became a harlot and so grew into the apostate Church of Rome!

Then the Pope, with all his night, sought to crush out the Church of God. Read the stories of the Albigenses in the South of France, the Waldenses in the valleys of Piedmont. Read the history of the Lollards in England and of the saints of God in any country which you please to choose. They were torn asunder. They were made to rot in prison. They were tortured on the rack. They were put to death in all manner of ways. In our own country, especially, by being burned to death at the stake. Yet the enemies of Zion have not prevailed against her. No, Rome, you shall never triumph! And even now, though today our clergy preach your doctrines and wear your garments, yet you shall not prevail against the Church of God, for He shall surely come, even He that has delivered in days gone by, and shall work deliverance for His Israel once again!

So I have spoken to you of Christ, of Israel, and of the Church. Now I come to deal with the subject as it relates to yourselves. As it was with the Church at large, as it was with Israel, as it was with our Lord Jesus, so expect it to be with you! As I go through this Psalm with you, and dwell upon it, you can apply it to yourself, my dear tried and persecuted Friend.

I. In the first three verses of the Psalm, we have a description of ISRAEL PERSECUTED, BUT NOT FORSAKEN.  
First notice, concerning Israel’s affliction, from where it came— “Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth.” Who was it that afflicted Israel? The text says, “they.” And why is the word, “they,” used? Because, to enter into particulars would rather obscure the sense than impress anything upon the memory. “They.” Why, it meant, in the case of the nation of Israel, Egyptians, Amalekites, Hivites, Hittites, Jebusites, Philistines, Assyrians, Babylonians—it would be such a long list—so the Psalmist just says, “they.” Who are the people that have afflicted you, my dear Friend? The Scripture leaves room for you to add the names if you care to put them in. But perhaps it will be wiser for you to forget all the names and simply to leave it as it is here—“Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth.”  
I hardly like to think of who they are, who, in many cases, have afflicted God’s true servants, but it is still true that “a man’s foes shall be they of his own household.” A woman is just brought to Christ and her greatest trouble comes from him whom she loves best of all living mortals—her husband becomes her terror! When a child has been brought to the Savior, it is sad that his worst fears should arise concerning the treatment he will receive from his father or his mother—but it has often been so. We do not put the names in—we can pray for the persecutors all the better if we leave it, “they.” A newly-converted Christian goes out into business. Does he find friends there? Sometimes God is very tender and pitiful, and casts the lot of his young children in among the gracious. But there are others who have a hard time of it, for they have to earn their bread in the midst of the ungodly. Christ seems to say to them, “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.” And these wolves are always seeking to destroy the lambs, if possible! Is it not a singular thing in Providence that though the wolves might have eaten all the lambs up long ago, yet there are a great many more sheep in the world, now, than there are wolves? And in this country, you know, there is not a wolf left— they have all died out. They could take care of themselves and fight, yet they have all gone. The sheep could not defend themselves, yet here they are in flocks! God takes care of the weak and the feeble—and in that very fact of natural history He seems to say to His people, “‘Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.’ When the wicked are cut off, you shall see it. ‘The meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.’”  
Outside, in the world, the Christian frequently meets with those who would rejoice to see him stumble, who try to make faults where there are none and exaggerate little mistakes into great crimes. Wherever he goes, he has to travel with his sword drawn—he finds an adversary behind every bush. He is a pilgrim through the midst of Vanity Fair whom the traders cannot understand. In his case, that ancient word is again fulfilled—“My heritage is unto me as a speckled bird, the birds round about are against her.” Such a man can truly say, “Many a time have they afflicted me.”  
But, next, let us ask, how does this persecution come? The Psalm says, “Many a time.” That means very often. So then, you who are faithful to God must expect that you will frequently be assailed by the foe. I know some of God’s saints who feel almost frightened when people speak well of them. They begin to say, “What have we been doing wrong? Would these people commend us if we had been serving our Master faithfully?” There is another side to that truth, for, “when a man’s ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.” But, between the two, it is not always easy to tell which is the right course. This we know—we are not to expect to find favor where Christ found no favor! If they called the Master of the house Beelzebub, we must expect that they will have ill names for us. If they imputed evil motives to Him, they will impute evil motives to us. If they even said of Him that He was a drunk and a wine-bibber, we must not be astonished if sometimes things of which we have never heard, or things that we abhor, should be laid to our charge! Therefore, arm yourselves, also, with the same mind as Christ had, who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself many and many a time.  
The Psalm tells us that these attacks of the ungodly were a real affliction to the people of God. “Many a time have they afflicted me. . .Many a time have they afflicted me.” It is written twice over to show how trying it was. The brine made poor Israel’s wounds smart. She was really hurt and she felt it. I have sometimes met with a person who has said, “I do not care what people say of me.” I am not sure whether that feeling is right, or wrong. Sometimes it may be an indifference which is pitiable. At other times it may be a courage which is admirable. But this I do know, that the saints of God have found slander to be a very piercing thing—it has gone right to their heart—the iron has entered into their soul. Hence the Savior said to His disciples, “Let not your heart be troubled,” for trouble tries, sometimes, to get to the heart. Affliction that does not really afflict is no affliction. But here they felt it. They groaned under it. The plowers made deep furrows, not mere surface ones—they cut down deep into the very spirit, into the very soul of Israel. And we must not wonder if, sometimes, for Christ’s sake, we have to meet with this kind of trial.  
Possibly, some Christian sitting here is saying, “I do not know much about that sort of affliction.” Well, be very thankful if you do not, but be ready for it—be prepared for it. There are some of us who had a hard time of it in years gone by. There was not any name in the catalog of contempt which some of us have not been made to bear. And now, perhaps, we have smoother times, but we stand quite ready to go into the burning fiery furnace, again, if so it must be, for this is a part of the portion of God’s servants—“Many a time have they afflicted me . . . Many a time have they afflicted me.”  
But notice, while we are speaking of how affliction came to Israel, that it came to her in her youth. What a coward Satan is! He always tries to attack God’s children most fiercely when they are young. Fight one of your own size, Sir! But that he is afraid to do. When the child of God gets well matured and, by experience knows how to fly to his God, Satan will often leave him quietly alone. You know the story in the Revelation of how, when the woman was delivered of a Man-Child, the dragon sought to destroy the Child at once and it was, therefore, caught up unto God, and to His Throne. No sooner did the devil spy out Christ, as He rose dripping from the waters of Baptism, than he determined to assail Him with his fierce temptations and, if possible, destroy Him before He began His ministry! But that young Christ, freshly anointed of the Spirit, was more than a match for him. Many a time since then has the Adversary met God’s people in their youth, when as yet they were feeble—when they were not expert in war, just as David in his youth had to fight the lion and the bear, and afterwards to meet the giant.  
Oh, it was grand for that ruddy youth to be able to say to Saul, “Your servant slew both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God.” It may be so with you who are young in Grace—do not be astonished if you meet with your fiercest attacks in the morning of your days! But have courage and say to yourself, “It was told me that it would probably be so. I am not taken at unawares, I was warned of that as I read the Psalm, ‘Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say: many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: yet they have not prevailed against me.’”  
Notice again that the Psalm goes on to describe this persecution of Israel under the imagery of plowers plowing her back. It is a kind of duplicate metaphor. It is just as the scourger, when he takes his dreadful lash and brings it down with all his might on he bare back of his victim, makes a deep gash where the throng falls. And it is also like the furrow that is cut by a plow, only it is not made in dead clods, it is right in the quivering flesh! The scourge falls again and there is another mark—again you can hear the dreadful motion of the whip of wire as it falls and cuts deeper and deeper into that poor sensitive bleeding back.  
Now, just so, Israel says, it was with her, and you know that it was so, for she seemed to be all but destroyed many times. That little nation was hacked to pieces. Zion was plowed as a field. So is it with some of God’s people—as it was, also, with their Master, and as it has been with the entire Church of Christ. The whip has come down mercilessly again and again and again—forty stripes save one—for Satan will never stint his blows. He will vex God’s people again and again and again, and if he could, he would utterly destroy them. Such often has been the lives of God’s saints—the very best and truest of them—and such are their lives now. It is not so with all of us, but it has been so with many. May the Lord help His suffering people! In patience may they possess their souls! As I remind you of what some of our Brothers and Sisters in Christ are just now suffering, I pray you to remember those that are in bonds as bound with them, and those that are in trouble, knowing that you, yourselves, also are yet in the body.

This, then, is the description of what God’s people have often had to suffer. The plowers have made long their furrows—they have left no headlands—they have plowed the back again and again—and scourged it with the cruel lash.  
But now, what is the reason for all this persecution? There are two reasons. And the first is the hatred of the serpent and his seed. There are two things that are inconceivable in length and breadth. The first is the love of God to His people, which is altogether without limit. And the next is the hatred of the devil, which is and must be finite, for he is only a creature, but still, it is as great as it possibly can be. We have no idea with what determined vehemence Satan hates these who belong to Christ! He will do anything he can in the hope of destroying one of them. He goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. That, Beloved, is why you have so many persecutions from those who are the faithful children of Satan—they are of their father, the devil, and his works they will continue to do—and one of those works is persecuting those who are the children of God.  
Still, there is a higher reason for the persecution of the saints. The second reason is because God permits it. Why does He permit it? Well, very often for your safety. “For our safety?” you ask. “For our safety?” Yes, the Church of God has often been preserved by persecution—she was never purer, she was never holier, she was never truer and she never lived nearer to God and more like her Savior than when she was persecuted! I venture to say of the Church of Scotland that she was never grander than in the Covenanting times when they met among the glens and up in the lone places when she sat on the heather watching, lest Claverhouse’s dragoons should be near. I think, of late years, she was never nobler than in Disruption times, and I believe she will never again be so good and great unless she is persecuted.  
Often we do not prosper in spiritual things, in times of ease, as we ought to do. Sometimes, the best friend of the sheep is the dog—and when the shepherd lets him loose, he fetches back the wanderers. And if there are any animals that ought not to be with the flock, the dog gets in among them and makes the separation between his master’s sheep and other people’s. We owe a great deal to persecuting dogs! I knew a young man who used to steal in here on Thursday nights and who would come into the Prayer Meetings and pray very sweetly and very earnestly. But he had no comfort in his home, for he had a father who could not endure his religion and was very bitter against him. His father died and the son inherited his property. He is never here, now. He has no love for God, as far as I can judge. He has grown cold and has turned aside, but as long as he was persecuted, he certainly seemed to be one of the most earnest men I ever knew! I believe that it has often been so, for silken days do not suit Christ’s soldiers—but in the battle they will glory when their Master is with them. So you see how persecution is sometimes for our safety.  
Next, it is for our trial and testing, to separate the precious from the vile. We are put into the sieve and Satan sifts us. He likes that task, but what a fool he is to do the sifting for Christ! It is good work when it is done and Satan, in persecuting the saints, is simply a scullion in Christ’s kitchen, cleansing His pots and pans. They never are so bright as when he scours them and it is a scouring with a vengeance. Yet, in that way he separates, or God, through him, separates, between the precious and the vile! The Lord sometimes allows persecution to break out upon His people that they may know more of themselves. And oh, how we fail when we come to times of persecution! I have heard of one who, when he was condemned to die for the faith, got out of bed in the night and held his finger over the candle to see whether he could burn. Poor soul, he felt that he could not endure that pain, but yet he said, “I do verily believe that when I come to the stake, the agony which I cannot endure in my finger, now, I shall bear in my whole body, for then I shall be suffering God’s will. Now, when I hold my finger in the candle, I am only suffering for my own curiosity and I get no support and strength.”  
And it was so. In Foxe’s Book of Martyrs, the tale is told of a poor woman who was taken with the pains of travail when condemned to die in prison. And when she cried out, her enemies said to her, “If you cannot bear this which is but natural, what will you do when you come to burn?” The woman answered, “Now, I am only suffering the curse that came upon the race through sin, and I feel it bitterly. But when I am burning at the stake, I shall be suffering for Christ’s sake, and I shall feel it to be sweet.” And it was noticed how bravely—to quote a strange phrase—she played the man. No, she played the WOMAN for Christ and suffered well for Him without tears or cries! Ah, yes, when God is with His people, He helps them wonderfully. But what a test it is to them and how they are driven at such times to prove their own weakness! How it tries their faith and proves of what stuff it is made! And how it makes them reel trembling and weak where they thought they were steadfast and strong!  
I find that my time has nearly gone, yet I am not half-way through my subject. I must just mention the blessings which come to the tried children of God through their troubles. I do so enjoy the reading of that part of the Psalm where it says, “But they have not prevailed against me.” You see a troop of horsemen riding into the very midst of the battle and you lose sight of them for a moment amidst the dust and smoke. But out of the middle of that cloud you hear the brave captain’s cry, “They have not prevailed against me!” You see that little band advancing into a yet more crowded host, all glaring upon them like wolves. Surely they will be cut to pieces! But in the very center of the struggling mass you see the banner still waving and again comes the cry, “They have not prevailed against me!” That is, in brief, the story of the Church of Christ, and that shall be the story of every Christian who puts his trust in God—he shall have to say, at the close of every trouble—yes, and even in the midst of it—“They have not prevailed against me.”  
What is the reason why the enemy cannot prevail against the saints of God? Read the next verse. “The Lord is righteous.” If He were to forsake His people and they were to perish, He would not be righteous. But He will not forget our work of faith and labor of love, nor will He leave us to fall in the evil day. “The Lord is righteous.” That is to say, He will take the right side, He will defend those that fight for the right and for the truth, He will prove Himself strong on the behalf of them that put their trust in Him. “The Lord is righteous” and, therefore, He will smite His adversaries upon the cheekbone! He will not let them go on forever in their pride and cruelty. They get the upper hand for a while, and they smite His saints, but, “the Lord is righteous,” and He will speedily avenge His own elect that cry day and night to Him! He may delay the overthrow of His people’s foes, but He will, in the end, take their part and display His Almighty Power. For the present, He is patient. He bears long with the ungodly, but He will not always do so. The fact that “the Lord is righteous” is the pledge that the wicked shall not prevail over His saints.  
Then notice the next sentence—“He has cut asunder the cords of the wicked.” Literally, it should run thus—“He has cut the traces of the wicked.” They are plowing, you see, and in the East, the oxen are fastened to the plow by a long cord. What does God do in the middle of their plowing? There are the bulls and there is the plow, but God has cut the harness—and how wonderfully He has sometimes cut the harness of the persecutors of His people! Look at the way He did this for our poor hunted Brothers and Sisters in Piedmont. They were likely, every one of them, to be crushed and, apparently, there was nobody to protect them. The Duke of Savoy, whose subjects they were, had given them up to be destroyed. The next country was France, but the King of France was a Roman Catholic and as eager for their destruction as was the Duke. But one day, Oliver Cromwell sent for the French ambassador and said to him, “Tell your master to order the Duke of Savoy to leave off persecuting my brethren in Piedmont, or he shall hear from me about the matter.” “Sir,” said the ambassador, “they are not the subjects of the King of France. He has nothing to do with them. The Duke of Savoy is an independent prince—we cannot interfere with him.” “I do not care about that,” replied Cromwell. “I will hold your king answerable if he does not stop the Duke of Savoy from persecuting the Piedmontese.”  
And they knew that “Old Noll” meant what he said. So, somehow, the King of France managed to interfere with that precious independent prince and told him that he had better cease his persecutions, for if he did not, Oliver Cromwell would take up the quarrel. Yes, and when the Pope, himself, had persecuted some English sailors at Rome, Cromwell wrote and said that he did not know whether “his holiness” would like to hear the thunder of his guns at Rome, but he very soon would do so unless he ceased his cruelties. Cromwell was the defender of those that feared God, and it was most Providential that such a man should have come into power just when he was needed for the protection of the persecuted. God always knows how to save His people! What He has done in the past, He can do again. He can cut the traces of those that are plowing and there will be no more deep furrows. How frequently He has done it! How often has He put out His hand and said to the wicked, “Stop!” And they have had to stop and that has been the end of their persecution! Cry mightily, then, you who are tried! Cry mightily unto the Lord to deliver you!

Dearly Beloved, “avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, says the Lord.” Therefore, leave your persecutors in His hands. Be you like the anvil— there have been a great many generations of hammers that have come and have gone, but the old anvil still stands in the smithy! Be you just like that—let your persecutors hammer away, but stand you steadfast to your God and to your faith—and may His blessed Spirit keep you so even to the end!  
The latter half of the sermon must come, if the Lord wills, on another Thursday night. May God’s blessing be with you! Oh, happy are they that are God’s people! Blessed are they that are in the furnace! Blessed are they that are tried and troubled! Has not He, whose lips can never lie, pronounced them blessed? “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you.” Therefore, reckon yourselves gladdened and honored when you are counted worthy to suffer for Christ’s sake!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**GALATIANS 4, 5:1.**

Galatians 4:1-5. Now I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child, differs nothing from a servant, though he is lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: but when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. Like little children, the Jewish Believers were under the Law. They observed this ceremony and that, just as children, though they may be heirs to vast estates, yet, while they are in their minority, are under tutors and governors. But now in Christ we have come of age and we have done with those schoolbooks and that tutorship, and we have received the adoption of sons! Now we have joy and peace in believing. We have begun to enter into our possession. We already have the earnest of it and, by-and-by, we shall receive the fullness of the inheritance of the saints in the Light of God.

6 *.*And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. While the Jewish Believers, like children, were under the Law, they did not have such direct access to the Father as we have. They could not enter into such close fellowship with God as we now can. We who are the sons of God, really born into His family, feel within us a something that makes us call God, “Father,” not only in prayer, saying, “Our Father, which are in Heaven,” but, inwardly, when we are not in the attitude of prayer, our hearts keep on crying, “Father, Father.” The Jew may say, “Abba,” and the word is very sweet. But we cry, “Father,” and it means the same thing.

7 *.*Therefore you are no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. All God’s sons are, in a certain sense, His servants, but there is a sense in which servants are not sons. We, therefore, are not like those servants who have no relationship to their master and no share in his possessions—we are sons. Whatever service we render, we are still sons, and we have a share in all that our Father has. We are heirs, “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” Are you living up to your privileges, Brothers and Sisters? Are we, any of us, fully realizing what this heirship means? Do we not often live as if we were only servants toiling for hire? Do we not tremble at God as if we were His slaves rather than His children? Let us remember that we are God’s sons and daughters, His heirs, and let us come close to Him. Let us take possession of the blessed inheritance which He has provided for us.

8-11. Therefore, then, when you knew not God, you did service unto them which by nature are not gods. But now, after that you have known God, or rather are known of God, why turn you, again, to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain. Among the heathen, there were many “lucky” and, “unlucky” days—sacred days and days in which they indulged in sensual excess. They had even “holy” months and, “unholy” months. Now, all that kind of thing is done away with in the case of a Christian—he is set free from such weak and beggarly superstitions! Among the Jews there were certain sacred festivals—times that were more notable than other seasons—but they, also, were done away with in Christ. We observe the Christian Sabbath, but beyond that, to the true Believer, there should be no special observance of days, months and years. All that is a return to “the weak and beggarly elements” from which Christ has delivered us. That bondage is all ended, now, but there are some who still “observe days, and months, and times, and years.” And Paul says to them, “I am afraid for you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain.” Every day is holy, every year is holy to a holy man! And every place is holy, too, to the man who brings a holy heart into it.

12. Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as you are: you have not injured me at all. “Be perfectly at home with me, for I am so with you. Though you Galatians have treated me very badly, yet you have not really injured me and I freely overlook your ill manners toward me.”

13-15. You know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the Gospel unto you at the first. And my trial which was in my flesh you despised not, nor rejected, but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. Where is, then, the blessedness you spoke of? for I bear you record, that if it had been possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and have given them to me. The Apostle remembers how they received him at first. His Gospel was, to them, like life from the dead and though he was full of infirmities—perhaps had weak eyes—perhaps had a stammering tongue—perhaps was, at that time, very much depressed in spirit—yet, he says, “You received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. You loved me so much that, if it had been possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and have given them to me.”

16. Have I, therefore, become your enemy because I tell you the truth? There come times, with all God’s servants, when certain people proclaim something fresh and new in doctrine—and then the old messenger of God who was blessed to them, comes to be despised. I have lived long enough to see dozens of very fine fancies started, but they have all come to nothing. I daresay I shall see a dozen more and they will all come to nothing. But here I stand—I am not led astray either by novelties of excitement or novelties of doctrine. The things which I preached at the first, I still preach, and so I shall continue, as God shall help me. But I know, in some little measure, what the Apostle meant when he said, “Have I, therefore, become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?”

17-20. They zealously affect you, but not well; yes, they would exclude you, that you might affect them. But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you. My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ is formed in you, I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you. The point of doubt was that they had been led astray by legal teachers—they had been made to believe that, after all, there was something in outward ceremonies, something in the works of the Law and so they had come under bondage again. So the Apostle says—

21-23. Tell me, you that desire to be under the Law, do you not hear the Law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a free woman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh—by Abraham’s own strength—

24. But he of the freewoman was by promise. Born when Abraham and his wife were past age—born by the power of God’s Spirit, according to promise.

24. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two Covenants: the one from the mount Sinai which genders to bondage, which is Hagar. It is the strength of the flesh which leads to bondage.

25, 26. For this Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answers to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. That is, of all of us who believe in Christ Jesus. We are born of the freewoman, not of the bondwoman—not born of the Covenant of Works and in the strength of the creature—but born of the Covenant of Grace, in the power of God, according to promise.

27, 28. For it is written, Rejoice, you barren that bear not; break forth and cry, you that travail not: for the desolate has many more children than she which has an husband. Now we, Brothers and Sisters, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. If we are God’s children, it is not by our own strength, or by the strength of the flesh in any measure or degree—it is by the Grace of God and the promise of God—that we are what we are.

29, 30. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what says the Scripture? Make a compromise, and be friends? Let Isaac and Ishmael live in the same house and lie in the same bed? No!

30, 31. Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, Brothers and Sisters, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

Galatians 5:1. Stand fast therefore in the liberty which Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. God grant us Grace to keep to Grace! God grant us faith enough to live by faith, even to the end, as the freeborn children of God, for His name’s sake! Amen.

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A PSALMIST’S QUESTION AND ANSWER  
NO. 2792

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, AUGUST 17, 1902.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 8TH, 1878.

**“If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.”  
Psalm 130:3, 4.**

NOTE, dear Friends, that the Psalm begins with this remarkable expression, “Out of the depths I have cried unto You, O Lord,” and I call your special attention to that utterance of the Psalmist because there are many who are afraid to pray when they are in the depths of soul-despair. It is comparatively easy to think you are praying when you have a fine notion of your own excellence. At such a time you can stand up in the Temple with the boasting Pharisee and pour out, as glibly as possible, expressions which you call prayer, but which God will never accept. But the very best prayer in all the world is that which comes from a broken heart and a contrite spirit—when, away in the corner there, beside the conscience-stricken publican, we smite upon our breast and cry, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” Do not, I beg you, think that your prayer will not succeed because you are in the depths. There is no place for praying like that! If ever a man is more sure to succeed with God at one time than at another, it is when he is in his greatest straits.

You know those men who are wisely generous, when they are about to distribute their alms, like to give to the most needy cases. The plea with them is the greatness of need, the urgency of distress—and it is just so with God and yourselves. It is not your goodness that will ensure an answer to your prayer—it is the greatness of your need. Even if you have sunk very low in your own esteem, till not a ray of hope seems left to you and you are shut up in the blackest darkness of despair, that is the very time for you to pray, even as the Psalmist said, “Out of the depths I have cried unto You, O Lord.” No prayers are more true, more real and, consequently, more acceptable—and no prayers are so likely to be quickly answered as those that come up from the very depths of soul-distress.

I begin my discourse with this observation because I want to cheer some of you who, at present, hardly dare to pray. Yet you are the very people who may pray—you who think that the Lord will never hear you are the people whom He is certain to hear and answer! When you are cleaned right out, when even the last rusty counterfeit farthing has been emptied out of your pocket and you stand before your God as a wretched, starving and bankrupt beggar, your abject poverty and dire need will commend you to His mercy and love! Now—if never before—now that you have come to your worst, dart your prayer up to Heaven and the Lord, who heard Jonah when he was in the whale’s belly, and Manasseh when he was in captivity in Babylon, will hear you and send you a speedy answer of peace to your supplication!

Note, also, how intensely the Psalmist pleads. In the second verse of the Psalm, he says, “Lord, hear my voice: let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.” So, when you pray out of the depths, mind that you plead with all your might. Cold prayers ask God to refuse our requests, but the red-hot petition of a soul on fire with agony after Divine Grace is certain to be heard. If you have hitherto knocked in vain at Mercy’s door, knock again—only knock more loudly than before—and if one blow of the hammer of prayer has not sufficed to make that portal open, knock, and knock, and knock again, determined that if you perish, you will perish praying and pleading! But you shall not perish if you will but ask, and seek, and knock with that importunity which will take no denial. He who has this holy resolve strongly worked within him by the blessed Spirit of God shall soon come into the morning light of gracious acceptance—and his heart shall be glad because the Lord has granted his petition.

This brings us to the threefold position which the Psalmist occupied when he prayed this prayer. It was, first, one of confession—“If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?” It was also one of humble confidence—“But there is forgiveness with You.” And it was one in which he saw the consequences of God’s mighty pardon—“There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.”

I. First, then, in our text, we have A CONFESSION—a confession which it will be well for everyone to make—“If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?”

The Psalmist may have felt that if a human witness had been appointed to mark his sin, he might have been able to stand, but he says, “If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, who shall stand?” “If my fellow man should watch me honestly and speak of me candidly, it may be that he would not be able to see a flaw in my life.” There are some men who could say as much as that. They have been enabled, by the Grace of God, to behave themselves in all integrity and uprightness, so that no one could justly bring any accusation against them. If the policeman were set to watch, or a spy were put into their house, or if even wife or child were the watcher, there are some who might be able to say, “I have borne myself uprightly both in the house and abroad among my fellow men and I could pass such a test as that.” But the Psalmist said, “If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who shall stand?” He knew that the Lord sees what no one else can see and He sees behind the action into the motive of it, the secret design hidden in the heart.

If any one of us will just think how we have been watched everywhere—at our board and in our bed, in our home and in the public street—if we will remember how the Omniscient eyes of God have seen everything and how He has recorded everything that we have thought and said, as well as what we have done—such a person must feel the force of the Psalmist’s question, “O Lord, who shall stand?” When I have occasionally met with brethren who have talked about their own perfection, I must confess that I have felt a sort of shudder go through me. The very last thing in this world that I would dare to claim would be my own perfection—and I believe that all of you will say that when you have lived nearest to God—it is then that you have mourned most your distance from Him. When your prayer has been most prevalent, it is then that you have seen most of its imperfection! And when your faith has been most vigorous, it is just then that you have had to lament your unbelief!

I firmly believe that it is only the gross spiritual darkness of ignorance that makes any man think himself perfect. If he had more light, he would see how abundant are the spots upon him. You have sometimes had a white pocket handkerchief and you have admired its whiteness. But when the snow has fallen and you have laid your handkerchief upon the newly-fallen snow, it has looked quite yellow instead of white—and so is it with the holiest life when it is placed by the side of the life of Christ, or looked at in the light of the perfect Law of God—then we see how stained and defiled it really is. So, Lord, we might stand up before our fellow men, and plead, “Not guilty,” when they belie and slander us, as they do, but, before Your holy Presence, “if You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?”

The Psalmist not only mentions the Divine Witness of his sin, but he also speaks of a special form of guilt. He does not say, “If You should mark open and overt transgression—the breaking out of bounds and going astray into the paths of evil.” But he says, “If You should mark iniquities.” Pull that word to pieces and it becomes “inequities”—whatever is not right in the sight of God. If He were to mark those inequities, who could stand before Him? Not one of us could do so! God observes how, after obeying the First Commandment, we forget the Second. Or, if we are mindful of the first table of the Law, which concerns our relationship to God, we neglect to observe the second table, which relates to our duty to our neighbor. Sometimes, perhaps, we spend much time in private devotion, yet do not attend to our family duties. At another time, family duties are attended to, but private devotions are forgotten. Sometimes there is a well-balanced relationship towards wife and children, but not towards our parents—or towards our own household, but not towards the world. It may be that we are kind to our friends and act according to the rule of equity with regard to them, yet we may be ungenerous towards those who are not our friends—and so be guilty of inequity there. Our character ought to be harmonious throughout and no life can be right in the sight of God unless it is holy. Let me alter that word a little and spell it in a different way, yet retain the same meaning—that is, whole—not part of it devoted to righteousness and part to unrighteousness, but all of it of one character, so that it is whole and holy! If that is what God requires, who among us can stand before Him? If You, Lord, should mark inequities, who among us could stand in Your sight? Not one! We must all fall down before You and confess our guiltiness.

Notice, next, how the Psalmist enquires, “Who shall stand?” If there were any way of getting into Heaven by a back door, or of hiding our sins from God’s eyes, we might have some ground of hope, but, Brothers and Sisters, there will come a day when we shall stand before God like prisoners at the bar. In that grand assembly, which shall be summoned by the sound of a trumpet around the Judgment Seat of God at the last assize, there is no one who will then be able to find a place of shelter, for the rocks will fall on us and not yield to our entreaties, nor will the mountains fulfill our wish and hide us from Him who will then be seated upon the Throne of God. No, we must then be before Him and when He begins to judge, then shall the wicked flee from before His face like chaff before the wind! And unless you and I have some better righteousness than our own, when God begins to mark iniquities and to punish them, we shall no more be able to stand than will the rest of mankind, but we, too, shall be driven before the blast of Justice into the fire which never can be quenched!

Think of this, my Brothers and Sisters—could any one of you now, apart from Christ, stand up before the living God? If you had, at this moment, to enter the dock and plead for your life before the Most High, without any Mediator to intercede for you, could you do it? No! You know that you could not. There is nobody here who would dare to appear before God except through Jesus Christ! We should all shudder at the very thought of such fatal presumption! Even those who are clothed in the righteousness of Christ are not always quite clear about appearing before God—how much less, then, must they be who have no robe of righteousness at all, but are only clad in the rags of their own iniquities? How shall they stand in that last dread day?

The Psalmist asks, “ Who shall stand?” as if he felt that he could not himself do so and, moreover, that he did not know anybody in the whole range of his acquaintance who could thus stand. David, who probably wrote this Psalm, had known many good men in his time and he was accustomed to associate with the excellent of the earth. Yet he says, “O Lord, who shall stand?” And I may repeat his question now, since God has marked our iniquities, “Who among us can stand in His sight upon the footing of our own good works?” Echo answers, “Who?” Did you think that you could, my Friend, before you came in here? You say, “I attend a church regularly. I have been baptized, confirmed and have taken the sacrament. I can stand.” Oh, do not attempt to stand on such a rotten plank as that! You need something far more substantial than that to support you! Or did you say, good Friend, “Well, I have always been a Dissenter. I have taken my seat, almost from a child, in the Meeting House and I have lived so that others esteem me and reckon me to be a man of God. And I think I can stand in my own consistency of character”? Ah, my Brother! You know not what the requirements of God really are if you can talk like that, for there are none of us who shall be able to stand when He comes to judge and try us unless we stand upon Christ’s merits! When God puts us into His scales, one by one, we shall all be found wanting! When He puts us into the furnace, one by one, He will find us nothing but a mass of dross! I mean, of course, unless we are saved by Grace and are trusting in the perfect obedience and atoning Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, God’s only-begotten Son.

Let us, therefore, all repeat this confession of the Psalmist and acknowledge that we are all guilty before God, for it is clear that no mercy can come to us until we are willing to put ourselves in the position where mercy can rightly deal with us. Mercy is for the guilty, forgiveness is for the unrighteous—so, if we will not class ourselves among the guilty and the unrighteous, mercy and forgiveness can never come to us!

II. Now, secondly, we come to THE PSALMIST’S CONFIDENCE. Although he felt that none could stand before God by themselves, yet he said, “But there is forgiveness with You.” How did he know that? And how do we know it?

Well, we know that there is forgiveness with God, because we have been informed by Revelation concerning the Character of God—and we find one prominent feature in the Character of God is that “He delights in mercy.” It gives Him the greatest possible pleasure when He can righteously forgive sin. He needs not to be entreated, as though He were slow to pardon, for it is one of His special joys to cast iniquity into the depths of the sea! God’s Character, as it is revealed to us in the Scriptures, convinces us that there is forgiveness with Him!

Moreover, this impression, conveyed to us by the general tenor of the Scriptures, is deepened by the direct teaching of the Gospel. Why did Jesus come into the world to be a Savior if God does not delight to save the lost? Why did He offer an Atonement if it were not that sin might be put away by that Atonement? Why was the fountain filled with blood if it were not God’s intent to wash away the stains of His people’s guilt? Oh, yes, that accursed and yet blessed Cross, or, rather, that bleeding Savior dying upon it ought to give us such an assurance of God’s forgiveness that we might never doubt it! There is forgiveness with God! Each wound of Christ proclaims it with an emphasis which makes it an absolute certainty!

Further, Beloved, we are assured that God will forgive sin because we have so many definite promises to that effect. I shall not stop to quote many of them, for I hope you know them for yourselves. Here are three— “Come, now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” “In those days, and in that time, says the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found.” “He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.” This blessed Book is as full of promises and proclamations of mercy as an egg is full of meat! It abounds in messages of love and Grace! It tells us that God wills not the death of the sinner, that He delights not in judgment, for that is His lefthanded work, but that His compassion freely moves towards the blackest and vilest of sinners when they repent and return to Him. He is never so much at home, so completely fulfilling the purposes of His Being as when He presses the wanderer to His bosom and cries, “How shall I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver you, Israel? How shall I make you as Admah? How shall I set you as Zeboim? My heart is turned within Me, My repentings are kindled together.” This is the Doctrine that is clearly taught in the Word of God and, therefore, we share the Psalmist’s confidence that there is forgiveness with Him!

In the Scriptures we are told that God’s forgiveness is full. He does not half forgive, as men often do. “I can forgive,” says somebody, “but I cannot forget.” But God—wonderful as it seems to us—forgets as well as forgives! This is His own declaration—“I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” Man’s forgiveness is often only verbal. The venom of anger lingers in his heart while the profession of forgiveness is upon his lips. But God’s forgiveness is full and ample. When He says that He forgives, He means it in the fullest sense of the word. He will treat you, repenting Sinner, as though you had never transgressed against Him! He will make you a new creature in Christ Jesus and you shall stand before Him, throughout eternity, as if even a thought of sin had never defiled your mind!

It is full forgiveness that God bestows and it is as free as it is full. You are not to buy it with your tears or your good deeds, for it is freely given to you by God. He is more willing to forgive you than you are to be forgiven—and it is more easy for Him to blot out your sin than it was for you to commit that sin! If there were no provision for the removal of your sin, what would you do? But there is abundant provision, made by God, for your forgiveness! His great mercy has been at work from before the foundation of the world so as to have everything in readiness for the complete forgiveness of all who repent of sin and trust in Jesus!

That forgiveness is also immediate. It is yours as soon as you repent and believe. Oh, how my soul leaped with joy when I first understood that God had forgiven me all my sin! That great act was instantaneous and it may be so with you, also! Your coming to God may take time, but God’s forgiveness of your sin is bestowed in a moment! The instant that a sinner believes in Christ, his sin is all gone, just as much gone as it will be if he lives 50 years and is a diligent servant of God all the time. Yes, I venture to say that the dying thief, when he had given one penitent glance at Christ, was as truly delivered from sin as those blessed spirits which had been for centuries before the Throne of God on high! Only think, my Friend, what it would be for you to receive forgiveness in a moment! You may have come in here as black as Hell itself through sin— yet go out without a stain upon you! “It cannot be done,” says someone. Yes it can, but only by God! For with Him all things are possible and He has already done it for many whom I know—and He will do it for all those who come to Him in penitence and put their trust in His dear Son!

And this forgiveness, once received, is irreversible. It is not God’s way to pardon a man and then, afterwards, to condemn him! That is the fashion of a certain set of theologians who believe in people being once forgiven and yet ultimately lost. I find no such teaching as that in the Scriptures! If the Lord says to anyone, “I absolve you,” it is done and, in that moment, every sin is forever put away! I even go the length of Kent’s hymn—

*“Here’s pardon for transgressions past,  
It matters not how black their cast!  
And O my Soul, with wonder view  
For sins to come, here’s pardon, too!”*

There is no playing fast and loose with you, Beloved. If you believe in Christ, you are justified with a justification that will stand the test of time, the strain of death and the trial of eternity! “He that believes on Him is not condemned,” and he shall not be ashamed or confounded, world without end. What do you say to this full, free, immediate and irreversible pardon?

And this pardon is for every sinner, of every kind, who repents and believes in Jesus. Many people seem to think that when we preach about the pardon of sin, we mean the pardon of not having “taken the sacrament,” as they express it, or not attending regularly a place of worship, or some such matters—but we mean the pardon of the greatest sins that anyone can commit—the pardon of thieving, the pardon of lying, the pardon of swearing, the pardon of infidelity, the pardon of fornication, the pardon of adultery, the pardon of murder! We do not preach a sham forgiveness for sham sinners. Christ Jesus is not a physician who came into the world merely to cure the finger ache. No, but it is the deadly disease of sin that Christ has come to cure! He has not come all the way from Heaven to earth and died in order that He might simply wash a tiny spot of blackness from a fair lady’s hand! He has come to make a Blackamoor white, to make the foulest and most abominable wretch that curses the earth, whiter than the snow! I will go as far as ever I can and say that if there is anybody who has committed every mentionable and every unmentionable sin—if he has even lived in secret vice and transgression till he would not dare to sit in the seat he occupies if others did but know one-tenth of what he has done—I am sent to tell even him that Jesus receives just such sinners as he is as soon as they repent and believe in Him! Well may we sing—

*“Who is a pardoning God like Thee,  
Or who has Grace so rich and free?”*

So we have come thus far with our subject. First, there is the confession that none of us can stand before God without a Mediator and, next, there is the confidence that, with God, there is forgiveness!

III. Every thoughtful person will be glad to follow on to the third point, which is, THE CONSEQUENCE OF FORGIVENESS.

I do not know whether you have noticed, but I have, that together with the return of Popery to this country—and it is coming back fast—there is scarcely a street in London in which you may not smell it at one end or the other. There has come back with it a kind of Roman fog which has obscured the vision of the general public. The editor of one precious newspaper—the newspaper editors, as you know, are all very profound theologians and you may always accept any theology that you find in the newspaper when it agrees with the teaching of the Bible—one of these clever men is alarmed because people are taught to sing—

*“Till to Jesus’ work you cling  
By a simple faith,  
Doing is a deadly thing,  
Doing ends in death.”*

“This is dreadful,” says the critic. All those gentlemen who bring out newspapers are so moral that they are afraid for the morality of Christian people, so they give us a great deal of warning and exhortation against such teaching as that hymn contains! The time was when almost every pulpit in England rang with the grand Doctrine of Justification by Faith and then the whole current of religious thought was strongly set against anything like salvation by the works of men! But, alas, it is not so now, for, with this Popery which has returned to our land, there has come back the common notion that, after all, salvation must be by works and there must be some merit in what man is doing. And that, if we go in for preaching the free pardon of sin, we shall demoralize this wonderfully pious country! And if we preach Lutheranism and Calvinism, we shall run the risk of making London a most wicked city!

It would be a dreadful thing, certainly, to make London worse than it is! But to my mind, that is a thing almost impossible of achievement. Still, that is the fear which is held before us, that we might pollute the precious intelligence and purity of this wonderful 19th Century by preaching the full justification of all who believe in Jesus. It will stand a good deal of polluting and then not be much worse than it is at present— but that is the fear with which our newspaper editors are trying to alarm us. Now it so happens that this was the constant talk of the Papists against Protestantism—their cry was, “If you preach Justification by Faith, men will never do good works. If you preach that pardon of sin is freely given, you will never get the people to be even decently honest.” But this theory has been exploded by fact. Remember what Dr. Chalmers said—that, in his first pastorate, he preached morality till he had scarcely a moral person in his parish! He preached righteousness and goodness till he could hardly find a single decent honest man anywhere about him! But, as soon as he began to preach salvation by the Grace of God, there came a total change over the characters of those who were round about him and, therefore, that man of profound erudition and of a masterly mind, sat like a child at the feet of Jesus to bear His testimony that it is the Gospel of the Grace of God, and not the preaching of the works of the Law, that creates holiness and produces good works!

You may go to the work-mongers to hear about good works, but you must come back to the Believers in Christ to find them. Their changed lives prove that the Gospel does produce the best possible results. The more we trample down human merit, the more do we exalt the merit of Christ! The more we show the absolute uselessness of good works to merit salvation, the more do we promote the highest type of morality and the more we lead men to live unto God from motives of gratitude for what He has done for them. This is a matter of fact.

What did the Romanism and the work-mongering of Laud produce? The Cavaliers, with their dainty perfumed curls! But what did the Justification by Faith, preached by Owen, and Howe, and Charnock, produce? Our Puritan forefathers, who, with all the sternness against which some speak, were the godliest race of Englishmen who have ever lived in this land! God send us back the like of them! You usually find that side which boasts its practicalness to be impractical and, on the other hand, the side which cries out against human works as a ground of trust, to be the very side which abounds in holiness unto the Glory of God! Well now, the text says, “There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.” Thus, you see, the Doctrine of Free Forgiveness actually produces in man’s mind a fear of God! You might have thought the Psalmist would have said, “There is no forgiveness with You, that You may be feared,” but it is not so.

The opposite of our text is very manifest . When there is no forgiveness, or when a man thinks there is none, what is the consequence? He is driven to despair and despair often leads to desperate living. Our old proverb says, “You may as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb,” and that is the spirit that actuates the despairing sinner. He says, “I cannot be forgiven. I must be damned—so I may as well enjoy life while I have it. There is no hope of Heaven for me, so why should I not make the most I can of earth? If I cannot obtain salvation from God, I will see what I can get out of the devil.” Is not that kind of talk quite natural? If there is no hope of forgiveness, then there is no proper fear of God.

Many are abiding in a state of carelessness because they really do not know whether there is any pardon to be had. When a man is in doubt as to whether he can be forgiven, he says, “I am afraid it would be a very long process and I do not know whether I would get it even then. Perhaps there is no pardon to be had, so I might become a religious man and yet miss the forgiveness of sins.” That is the thought of many and, therefore, they become torpid and lethargic, careless and indifferent. But when the Holy Spirit teaches a man that there is forgiveness to be had, he would leap out of his very body rather than miss it! Now you will see him gird up his loins and run with endurance till he reaches the goal! Now the man will play the man! He says, “What? Is there forgiveness for such a sinner as I am? Is a new start in life possible for one who has been so sad a failure? Is the picking up of the harlot off the street and the thief from the prison and the debauchee out of the gutter possible?” This hope gives the man something that is like a new mainspring to a watch. You have put within him that which will help him to subdue his sin and become a better man throughout the rest of his life. Is it not so? Only assure the man of the pardon of his sin and that assurance supplies new vigor to his soul!

How encouraging, too, is the belief that there is pardon to be had! But, more, how sanctifying is the actual reception of it! Imagine the experience of some dear friend who has just believed in Jesus and to whom the Spirit of God bears witness that he is forgiven. What sort of a man will he be? I will try and picture him to you. Already I see his eyes glistening with a light I never saw there before. The man looks positively handsome! You would hardly recognize him if you knew him before this great change happened to him. He had a burden on his mind that made him always look worn out. That has gone and now he looks supremely blest! But I also see tears in his eyes—why? He was not much given to weeping in his old days. He is grieving to think that he should ever have offended so kind a God, for nothing makes us so sorry for sin as the sense of being completely forgiven. He knows he is pardoned, he is sure of it! He knows that God loves him and now he loathes himself that he should ever have sunk so low. Yet, if you will take one of his tears and put it under a microscope, or analyze its component parts, you will find that there is no bitterness in it. Joy is mingled with his sorrow as he stands at the foot of the Cross and bathes his Lord’s feet with his penitential, yet rainbow tears. Now see him go home. He has some Christian friends there, I hope, and if so, he will not be long with them before they begin to notice the change in him! And it is not long before he wants to tell them the blessed secret! Mother wants to know what has happened to her boy and his arms are thrown around her neck as he says, “Mother, I have found the Lord.” She is very delighted and perhaps very surprised, for it was not his usual way to talk about religion! Sometimes he used to sneer and jeer at it. Will he go to bed without prayer? No, he needs nobody to tell him to pray—he has been praying all the way home and while he has been sitting there. These are the first real prayers he has ever presented, but it has now become as natural for him to pray as it is for a living man to breathe!

Watch that man, tomorrow, when he goes to his work. Perhaps he does not introduce the subject of religion among his workmates, but he keeps himself to himself as much as he can. By-and-by, they begin using filthy language around his bench and, at last, he cannot endure it, so he lets fall just a little word or two of protest—and then they have found him out. For the next few days, they will cluster round him, jesting and jeering. “He is a hypocrite, of course.” That is their notion of fair play— everybody who does not think as they think must be a hypocrite! “He has some selfish motive for turning Methodist.” They know very well that they would not do anything good unless there was something to be got by it, so they measure the other man’s corn by their own bushel and they impute to him some unworthy motive. And now he, who was always, “Hail fellow well met,” gets abundance of banter and abuse, if not worse. He gets away, sometimes, where he can pray by himself, and he likes to find a quiet corner where he can read his Bible. He used to read nothing but the low trashy novels of the day, if he read anything at all, but the Word of the Lord has now become sweet and precious to him. He has a little two-penny Testament in his pocket and he gets a few minutes, whenever he can, that he may become better acquainted with his Master’s Word. He is missed very much over at “The Black Bull,” or, “The White Horse,” and he is likely to be missed there, for he has found a better tap to draw from and to drink at—and he no longer goes to the entertainments where his former companions revel in rioting and chambering and wantonness. They ask, “Where is old Jack gone? What has become of him?” It has happened to him, as to many more—“Old things are passed away; all things are become new.”

There is another man in that workshop who swears occasionally and drinks a great deal—and he says that he does not believe in this Doctrine of Grace—he thinks its tendency is immoral. Ah, his own talk is not very sweet, but he is very strong upon that point of morality! Give him a pint of beer and see how he will argue! Give him another pint and then see how he will denounce this Calvinistic doctrine of immediate pardon through faith in Jesus! He says that if everybody believed in that way, he does not know what would happen, but he appears very horrified at the prospect, especially after he has had a third pint of beer! I notice that some of you laugh at my description. Well, the thing I am alluding to, the miserable hypocrisy of the world, ought to be laughed at—unless we cry over it—which would be better. They call us cants, but the biggest cants are on the other side. I tell you that there is no cant in all the world so despicable as the mean hypocritical man who picks out every honest Christian and says that he is a hypocrite! Such people know better, yet they must bespatter us with mud in order that their own filthiness may not be observed. I may well speak upon this matter, for I am one of the principal sufferers from this kind of treatment and I contend that we do not deserve this at the hands of the world. We know, too, that it is enmity against our Master and against His Truth that provokes such attacks.

Yet, sometimes a converted man has a different experience from that which I have been describing. There is a dear Brother—not present now, or else I might not tell the story—an earnest and useful member of this Church. Many years ago I recollect his writing to tell me of his conversion. He was then a butler in a noble family and I rejoiced with him over his conversion. Some months later, he came and brought me two guineas as an offering to God. And, as he laid them on my vestry table, he said, “This is how I came by them. I am employed as butler to Lady So-and-So. When I became a Christian, I cleaned my plate so much better than I had ever done before, that her Ladyship took notice of what I did and, on one occasion, when she had company, she brought a number of distinguished individuals into the butler’s pantry to see how beautiful her plate looked. “One of them said to me, ‘You do this work thoroughly well, young man! Here are a couple of guineas for you.’ So I said to him, ‘It is very kind of your Lordship, but I shall take that money, next Sunday, to Mr. Spurgeon.’ He made some jesting remark and then asked, ‘Why are you going to do that?’ I replied, ‘It is because I love the Lord Jesus Christ that I have become a better servant to her Ladyship than I used to be. I hope I am not careless now about any of my duties and I want my Savior to have the credit of all I do.’”

So, dear Friends, you see that you can glorify Jesus Christ in cleaning plate, or digging in a garden, or selling potatoes, or anything else that is right, so long as you do it unto Him and to His praise—doing the best you can because you feel that a Christian ought never to do anything badly. Even the most common thing that he turns out should be done by him as a servant of Christ to the very best of his ability. If you act so, I shall not care what profession or occupation you choose, so long as it is a lawful one, nor in what line of life you may be called to move, so long as this is your firm and fixed resolve, “I will not seek the glory of self. I will not seek my own honor. I will seek the glory of God alone.”

My Friends, come and put your trust in Jesus! Take His blood and righteousness to be your only hope and then you may, by your blameless, honest, upright, sober, kindly Christian lives, put to silence the accusations of foolish men, or, at least take away from them any ground of accusation. Walk carefully, prayerfully, humbly before God and men, putting your trust, not in yourselves, but in Christ, alone, and you shall then find, in your experience, the best exposition of the text, “There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared,” for you will prove, by your own fear of God, which is continually before your own eyes, that His free, rich, Sovereign Grace, manifested in your pardon, did not produce in you, indulgence in sin, but gave you the sweet liberty of walking in holiness and in the fear of the Lord. God bless you all, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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“THERE IS FORGIVENESS”  
NO. 2422

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY, JULY 21, 1895. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 23, 1887.

**“But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.” Psalm 130:4.**

HAVE you noticed the verse which comes before the text? It runs thus, “If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?” That is a confession. Now, confession must always come before absolution. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” If we try to cloak our sin, “if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us,” and no pardon can come from God to us. Therefore, plead guilty, plead guilty! You ought to do it, for you are guilty. You will find it wisest to do it, for this is the only way to obtain mercy. Cast yourself upon the mercy of your Judge and you shall find mercy—but first acknowledge that you need mercy. Be honest with your conscience and honest with your God—confess the iniquity which you have done and mourn over the righteousness to which you have not attained.

You notice that this confession is recorded with a kind of grave astonishment—“If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?” This is as much as for the Psalmist to say, “I am sure that I cannot, and who can?” And, my dear Brothers and Sisters, if God shall deal with us according to our iniquities, where shall we stand, and who among us shall stand anywhere? I dare not stand to preach if God shall judge me according to my iniquities! You dare not stand to sing—what have you to do with singing if God is marking your iniquities? I wonder that men can stand at their counters and stand at their work while their sin is unforgiven! And then how shall we stand in the Day of Judgment? The best saint on earth, if he stands in his own righteousness, alone, and is judged according to his own offenses, why, the Justice of God will blow him away like the chaff, or consume him as with a flame of fire! “If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?”

It is a dreadful fact that this, “if,” is no, “if,” to those who are not believers in Christ, but it is a matter of terrible certainty! God marks the iniquities of you who are unbelievers. Although as yet He does not visit them upon you, else you could not stand, yet He sees them and He records them! As gold and silver are put into a bag and sealed up, so are your iniquities. All the transgressions of your past life are in the Book of Record, from which they can never be blotted out except by one gracious hand! Would to God that you would accept pardon from that pierced hand! But, apart from that, your iniquities are engraved as in eternal brass! And in that day when the forgotten things shall be brought to light, all the sins that now lie at the bottom of the sea of time shall be cast up upon the shore and all shall be seen. And every secret thing shall be set in the light of day, and every transgression and iniquity shall be revealed by the light of the Great White Throne—and the ungodly shall be punished for all their ungodly words and ungodly deeds and ungodly thoughts according to the rules of equity in that last day of assize!

O Sirs, God will mark iniquity and then, whoever is out of Christ shall be able to stand! Whoever has never hidden in the riven Rock of Ages shall find no shelter! No, shall they not all cry to the mountains to fall upon them, to hide them from the dreadful face of Him who shall sit upon the Throne of God? Even at this time there are some in this House of Prayer whose sins are lying upon them and whose transgressions are written in God’s Book of Remembrance! How can they dare to stand, even, before a Throne of Grace, and how will they stand before the Throne of Judgment?

That third verse makes an appropriate preface to my text—it is the black thundercloud upon which I see written, as with the finger of God and with a lightning flash, the wonderful words we are now to consider, “But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.”

I. My first head is taken from the first word of the text—“But.” Here is A WHISPER OF HOPE. “If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But”—Oh, the sweet music of that little word! It seems to come in when the terrible drum of alarm is being beaten and the dreadful clarion of judgment is sounding forth! There is a pause with this word, “But there is forgiveness.” It is a soft and gentle whisper from the lips of Love—“But there is forgiveness.”

This comes into the soul after a full confession of sin. When you have knelt down before God and acknowledged your transgressions and your shortcomings, and your heart is heavy, and your soul is ready to burst with inward anguish, then may you hear this gracious Word of God, “But there is forgiveness.” When, under a sense of sin, it seems as if the very fiends of Hell were shrieking in your ears because of the awful doom which is drawing near—when you shall be driven from hope and from the Presence of God, then, when you fall on your face in the terror of your soul because of your iniquity, then comes this sweet Word of God—“But there is forgiveness.” It is all true which your conscience tells you. It is all true which the Word of God threatens concerning you! Then acknowledge that it is true and bow yourself in the dust before God—and then you shall hear in your soul, not only in your ears, but in your

 heart, this blessed Word of God, “But there is forgiveness.”

Some of us remember when we first heard this Word. When it came, it was to us like the clear shining after rain—“But there is forgiveness.” Some of us were, perhaps, for weeks and months without any knowledge of this blessed Truth of God—pining for it, hungering for it—and when the Lord brought it home with power into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, oh, there was no music like it! Angels could not sing any tune so sweet as these Words of God spoken to our hearts by the Holy Spirit, “But there is forgiveness.” Go your way, my Hearer, and confess before God all your sin! I will not say what it has been. Perhaps you have lived for many years in the pursuit of sinful pleasures. Perhaps you have been dominated by your own will—you have tried to be lord and master, or queen and mistress of your own wicked spirit. And, perhaps, you have done evil as often as you could, and you are sensible of your sin, and your wounds bleed before God because of it. Well, then, in comes this whisper of hope—“But there is forgiveness.” God make it as sweet to you to hear it as it is to me to tell of it!

This whisper of hope sometimes comes to the soul by the Spirit of God as the result of observation. A man, full of sin, thinks to himself, “Well, but others, also, have been full of sin, yet they have been forgiven. What if I have been a blasphemer and injurious? Yet so was Saul of Tarsus and he had forgiveness from the Lord. What if I have been a thief? Yet so was he who hung upon the cross, and that day was with his Lord in Paradise. What if I have been a fallen woman, and have been defiled with sin? Yet there is forgiveness, for she was forgiven who was a sinner, and came and washed Christ’s feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head, loving much because she had much forgiven. What, even if I have been an adulterer? Yet such was David. What if I have been a persecutor? Yet such was Manasseh. Into whatever sin I may have fallen, I observe that others like I have been snatched from these horrible pits— and why should not I be?” I would whisper this message into the ear of anybody here who is conscious of sin. If you will but look about you, you will see others like yourself who have been washed, cleansed and sanctified. Some of them are on earth, and many more of them are in Heaven, who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb! Sweet, then, is this whisper of hope arising out of observation of others—“But there is forgiveness.”

This whisper also comes in opposition to the voice of despair, for despair says to a soul under a sense of sin, “There is no mercy for you! You have sinned beyond all limits. Your death warrant is signed, the verdict has been given against you, there remains nothing for you but everlasting burnings!” No, Soul, God’s Word against your word any day! God’s Word says, “There is forgiveness,” Nothing can destroy despair except a message from God, Himself, and this passage is like a huge hammer to break in sunder the gates of brass and dash in pieces the bars of iron— “There is forgiveness.” “All manner of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” In the greatness of His heart, Jehovah declares that He delights in mercy, and this is the song which went up to Him in the old Jewish Church with many a repetition, and is just as true today—

*“For His mercies shall endure,  
Ever faithful, ever sure!  
He His chosen race did bless  
In the wasteful wilderness.  
For His mercies shall endure,  
Ever faithful, ever sure.  
He has, with a piteous eye,  
Looked upon our misery!  
For His mercies shall endure,  
Ever faithful, ever sure.”*

You have not gone beyond His mercy! You cannot go beyond His mercy if you will trust His Son! “There is forgiveness.” Let this whisper drive away despair! What a blessed whisper it is! “There is forgiveness.” “There is forgiveness.” Let it enter your soul and drive those grim ogres and hobgoblins of despair away into the sea of forgetfulness. “There is forgiveness.”

This whisper of hope is, further, the answer to conscience. When Mr. Conscience is really at work, he has a very terrible voice. There is no lion in the thicket that roars like a truly awakened conscience. Conscience says, “You knew your duty, but you did not do it. You have sinned away many a day of Grace—you have refused Gospel invitations, you have striven against the light of nature and the Light of God—you will go down to Hell well deserving your doom! When the millstone is about your neck, to sink you into the abyss, you will deserve to have it so, for you have earned all this for yourself by your iniquities.” I will not seek to stifle conscience, nor ask you to shut your ear to his voice. Let him speak, but still, do you not hear between his roars this sweet note as of a silver harp, “But-but-but-but there is forgiveness”? O conscience, there is forgiveness! I am as guilty as you say I am, and much more, for you cannot see all the sin that I have committed—“but there is forgiveness.”

Let me go still further and say that this whisper of hope is an answer, even, to the Law of God. The Ten Commandments are like ten great cannons fully charged and if we were, like the rebels in India, tied to the muzzles of them and blown to pieces, it would be only what we deserve! But just when the fuse is lighted and about to be applied, there rings out this blessed Word of God, “There is forgiveness. There is forgiveness.” The Law says, “The soul that sins, it shall die,” and the Law knows no mercy—it cannot know any mercy. Sinai has never yet yielded one drop of water to cool the parched tongue of a guilty sinner! Never did a shower reach its craggy peaks! It is a mountain of fire and the thunder rolls over its summit with the sound of a trumpet exceedingly loud and long, making all who hear it to tremble!

God, when He comes to judge, must judge according to justice—“butbut-but-but there is forgiveness”! There is another mountain besides Sinai—you have not come unto Mount Sinai—but you have come unto Mount Zion! There is another Lawgiver besides Moses! There is Jesus, the Son of God! There is another Covenant besides the Covenant of Works—there is a Covenant of rich, free, Sovereign Grace, and this is the essence of it—“There is forgiveness.” Oh, that I could convey that whisper into the ear of every sinner who is here! I can do that, but oh, that God the Holy Spirit would put it into your heart, that you might never forget, “There is forgiveness”!

II. Now I advance to my second division. In our text I see, besides the whisper of hope, AN ASSURANCE OF THE WORD OF GOD— *“There is forgiveness with You.”*

Dear Friends, “there is forgiveness.” Nature could never tell you this great Truth of God. You may walk the cornfields at this moment and see the bounty of God in the waving grain, but you cannot read forgiveness there. You may climb the hills and see the beauty of the landscape. You may look upon silver streams that make glad the fields, but you cannot read forgiveness there. You can see the goodness of God to man, but not the mercy of God to sinners! But if you come to this Book, you can read it here.

Turn to the Old Testament and you will see that it reveals sacrifice— lambs, bullocks and goats. What did they all mean? They meant that there was a way of pardon through the shedding of blood—they taught men this, that God would accept certain sacrifices on their behalf. Then turn to the New Testament and there you will see it revealed more clearly that God has accepted a Sacrifice, the Sacrifice which He, Himself, gave, for, “He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all.” In this Book you read how He can be “just, and the Justifier of him that believes.” How He can be a just God and yet a Savior. How He can forgive and yet be just as righteous as if He punished and showed no mercy. This, in fact, is the Revelation of the Gospel! This is what this Book was written to teach, to tell you that, “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” Therefore we come to you, not merely with a hopeful whisper, but with a full, distinct, emphatic, unquestionable assurance—“There is forgiveness.” “There is forgiveness.”

Turn to this Word of God and you will find the certainty of forgiveness. “I believe in the forgiveness of sins.” What a grand article of the creed that is! Do you believe it? Then do not doubt, do not hesitate—“There is forgiveness.” You must know that there is such a thing, or else you will not be eager to seek for it! It is in vain to go in quest of a myth or a perhaps—but here is a certainty for you. “There is forgiveness.” Doubt it not! Believe it to be so and then seek after it with all your heart. “There is forgiveness.” That is a matter of certainty.

Notice, if you please, the broad indefiniteness of the text—“There is forgiveness.” It does not say, “There is forgiveness for this sin or for that,” but, “There is forgiveness.” Where God draws no limit, do not you draw any! If God sets the door wide open and says, “There is forgiveness,” then come along, you sinners, whoever you may be, from jails and penitentiaries! Come along from your Pharisaic places of boasting and selfrighteousness! Come along with you, for there is forgiveness even for you! You rich, you poor, you learned, you ignorant that know nothing, know at least this—“There is forgiveness.” This text shuts out nobody! I bless God, sometimes, for the grand vagueness of His speech. When He draws lines of distinction, as sometimes He does, then are we anxious to know who is shut in and who is shut out. But when He simply says, “There is forgiveness,” let us jump at it and grasp it by an act of faith and, once let us but grasp it, He will never take it from us, for Jesus Himself said, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.”

Notice, too, the immediate presentness of the text. Our version has it, “There is forgiveness,” but there is no verb in the Hebrew. The translators put in the words, “There is,” so we are to read it, “There

 was forgiveness.” “There is forgiveness.” “There will be forgiveness as long as life lasts.” But I like it as it stands here. “There is forgiveness” tonight. “There is forgiveness” now. “There is forgiveness” where you sit, just as you are, just now! Oh, that I could say it so as to convince you of the truth of it, and give a grip, a squeeze of my right hand, to each one of you! I would like to do it! O my dear Friends, do not despair, do not be bowed down any longer, “there is forgiveness.” There is forgiveness now!

And it is intended to have a personality about it. It is no use telling anybody that there is forgiveness for other people, but none for him. This text is made for you, dear Friends, and the preacher is sent to proclaim this Truth of God to you, for he is sent to preach, as far as he can, to every creature under Heaven. “There is forgiveness” for you, though you think there is none! Your thoughts are not as God’s thoughts—neither are your ways as His ways. There is, there surely is, at this moment, forgiveness! Oh, that you would prove it by an act of faith! The moment you believe in Christ, your sins are all forgiven! Look to Him whom I would hold up before you, as Moses held up the brazen serpent on the pole! Look, for there is life in a look to Him that died for guilty men—

*“There is life for look at the Crucified One! There is life at this moment for thee.  
Then look, sinner—look unto Him, and be saved— Unto Him who was nailed to the tree.”*

May this be the moment when the Spirit of God shall make it to be so to many here present! “There is forgiveness.”  
III. Now I must go a little farther and notice, in the text, A DIRECTION OF WISDOM—“There is forgiveness with You.” “With You.”  
Do you hear this, dear Heart? You are shrinking from your God. You are anxious to run away from Him—but that is where the forgiveness is— with God! Where the offense went, from that very place the forgiveness comes—“There is forgiveness with You.” “Against You, You only, have I sinned,” but, “there is forgiveness with You,” with the very God whom you have offended! It is with God in such a way that it is part of His Nature. “He delights in mercy.” “God is Love.” He glorifies Himself by passing by transgression, iniquity and sin. There is forgiveness with God. It is in God’s very Nature that it lies. Fly not away, then, from the very place where forgiveness awaits you!  
“There is forgiveness with You.” Some read the passage, “There is a propitiation with You.” Now, the Lord Jesus Christ is that Propitiation, and He is with God. He has gone up into Glory and He is at the right hand of the Father even now. Make your way to God, for the Propitiation is there before you! Meet your God at the Mercy Seat lest you have to meet Him at the Judgement Seat! There is forgiveness always with God, for Jesus is always there. Therefore, go to Him and find it.  
“There is forgiveness with You,” that is to say, God has it in His immediate gift. He will not have to hunt for it, for it is with Him, He has it ready to bestow! He will not need you to plead for it with so many sighs, cries and tears, but He has it waiting for you. The writ by which you shall be set free is already made out! “There is forgiveness with You.” The Lord Jehovah has signed you free pardon, it lies before Him now—go and take it! “There is forgiveness with You,” immediately, and if you do but believe in Jesus, you shall receive it from His hand!  
“There is forgiveness with You.” Then, depend upon it, there is a way for forgiveness to get to me, for if God has it, He can somehow get to me with it! I may be far off from hope. I may be surrounded, as it were, with brick walls, shut in like a man in one of the dungeons of the Bastille, where men lay till they were forgotten and the very jailer did not know who they were, nor when they came there. If you are even in such a sad state as that, God can get at you—there is forgiveness with Him—and He can get it to you!  
And if it is with God, then there is a way for you to get to it, for there is One come who stands between you and God! There is a Mediator between God and men, the Man, Christ Jesus—but you do not need a mediator between Christ and yourself—you can come to Him just as you are! You need a Mediator with God and there is Jesus Christ, who is God and Man, able to lay His hands both on you and on your gracious God, and to bring you into His Presence!  
I feel somehow certain that I am going to have some souls, tonight, to be my reward. I love to ring those charming bells, “Free Grace and dying love.” A great part of the pleasure of preaching is derived from the fact that I know that God’s Word will not return to Him void, but that some who hear the Gospel message will receive it and be saved! Listen to this Word of God, you doubting, trembling, despairing sinner—“there is forgiveness”—that forgiveness is with God! If I told you that it was with me and that I was the priest, perhaps you would be foolish enough to believe me. But I will tell you no such lie! It is not with any priest on earth—it is with the Lord! “There is forgiveness with You,” and you may go to God just as you are, with nothing in you hands, and cast yourself at His feet, quoting the name of His dear Son. Rest there and the work is done, for, as God lives, it is true, that there is forgiveness with Him that He may be feared!  
IV. I close with this word. The last part of the text shows A DESIGN OF LOVE—“There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.”  
Somebody said, “I should have thought that it would have read, “that You may be loved.” Yes, so I would have thought, but then, you see, fear, especially in the Old Testament, includes love! It includes every holy feeling of reverence, worship and obedience towards God. That is the Old Testament name for true religion—“the fear of God.” So I might say that the text declares, “There is forgiveness with You, that You may be loved, worshipped and served.” Still, even in the sense of fear, it is a most blessed fact that they who fear the Lord are delightful to Him. “The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy.”  
Do you not see how it is, dear Friends, that men fear the Lord because He forgives their sins? It must be so because, first, if He did not forgive their sins, there would be nobody left to fear Him, for they would all die! If He were to deal with men after their sins, He must sweep the whole race of mankind off the face of the earth! But there is forgiveness with Him, that He may be feared.  
Next, if it were certain that God did not pardon sin, everybody would despair, and so, again, there would be nobody to fear Him, for a despairing heart grows hard like the nether millstone. Because they have no hope, men go on to sin worse and worse—but there is forgiveness with God that He may be feared. The devils never repent, for there is no pardon for them. There is no Gospel preached in Hell and, consequently, there is no relenting, no repenting, no turning towards God among lost spirits. But there is forgiveness with Him that He may be feared by you. What a wonderful effect pardon has upon a man!  
What a wonderful effect it has upon a man to know that he is pardoned, to be sure that he is forgiven! He begins to tremble all over. Remember how it is written, “And I will cause the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them, as at the first. And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against Me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against Me. And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honor before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it.”  
A man who has been forgiven is afraid that he should go and sin again after such love and such mercy. He is melted down by the goodness of the Lord. He does not know what to make of it. For a time he can hardly believe that it is true! I know that when I was converted, I felt at first like Peter when the great iron gate was opened, and the angel brought him out of prison. He knew not what was done to him by the angel and he thought he saw a vision—he could not believe it to be true that he was really released! So is it with the saved sinner—you are so amazed, you are so overwhelmed, that you are filled with fear at the intense delight of pardon, being half afraid that it cannot really be true that such a wretch as you can have been pardoned and that all your iniquities are blotted out forever! The wondrous Grace of God makes you tremble with a holy reverential fear and you sing, with Dr. Watts—  
*“When God revealed His gracious name  
And changed my mournful state,  
My rapture seemed a pleasing dream,  
The Grace appeared so great!”*  
Are there any of God’s people here who are afraid that they do not fear God enough? If you want to revive your fear of God and have it deepened, believe in your pardon. Believe! It is a singular way to come to fear God, but believe that you are forgiven, prize your forgiveness, know that your sins are blotted out, cling to the Cross and all that sweet fear of God, by which is meant the whole of piety, will abound in your soul!  
Some think that it will be a good way of deepening their Graces to begin to question whether they are Christians. That is the wrong way altogether! Unbelief does not heal anybody—it is faith that heals! Believe up to the hilt! Believe, come what may! Believe in Christ, though your sins rage and rave and roar! Believe in Christ, though the devil tells you, you are damned! Should Hell seem to open at your feet, believe in your pardon through the precious blood! Do not stagger at the promises of God through unbelief, and you shall feel yourself filled with a holy fear, joy, peace, love, zeal and a burning desire to serve Him who has done all this for you! “There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.”

If any of you poor people, here, who have not yet found the Savior, are saying, “We wish that we could feel our sin more. We wish that we could fear the Lord more.” Let me tell you that this fear is to come to you afterwards. There is forgiveness, first, and then the fear comes afterwards. All the fear in the world that is worth having is the result of pardoned sin. The fear that is not to be cast out, the fear that has no torment in it, is that fear which comes of a sense of every iniquity being blotted out! I charge you, believe in Jesus Christ! In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, I say to you unbelieving ones—Believe in Him now! Rise, take up your bed, and walk. I, who have no power whatever of myself, yet speaking in my Master’s name, know that His power will go with His Gospel and that His Word shall not return to Him void. Believe and live! God bless you, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALMS 129; 130; 131.**

Three Songs of degrees.  
Psalm 129:1, 2. Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say: many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: yet they have not prevailed against me. The trials of some of God’s people begin very early. When first we put on the armor of God, the adversary is usually very bitter against us. Some of our old friends and acquaintances cannot bear to see the change in us—and they bitterly oppose us—so that God’s children may have to say, “From our youth they have afflicted us.” But you must not think that the beginning of sorrows will be the end of them. Oh, no! “Many a time have they afflicted me.” God’s children are often called to pass under the rod and the rod is frequently held in the hands of the children of men. Your Savior carried the Cross and He expects you to carry it, too. He does not tell you to take it up now and then, but to take it up always, and to follow Him with a constant will, cheerfully bearing it for His dear name’s sake. “Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: yet”—is not that sweetly put?—“yet they have not prevailed against me.” You remember how Joseph’s brothers envied him and, at last, sold him into Egypt? Yet from the dungeon he rose to the throne and he could say, “Yet they have not prevailed against me.” If you are of the seed royal, one of the chosen people of God, they shall not prevail against you! Even proud Haman, with all his plotting, was not able to overcome poor Mordecai! And the Lord your God will preserve you from the fury of all your adversaries and bring good to you out of all the evil they try to do to you.  
3. The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows. Like one that has been cruelly scourged until each cut of the lash seemed to make a furrow through the quivering flesh. “The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows.” How truly could our blessed Lord utter these words when He was delivered up to wicked men to be scourged!  
4. The LORD is righteous: He has cut asunder the cords of the wicked. “The Lord is righteous.” There is our hope and comfort! He takes away from them the scourge and cuts up the cords of which it is made. And those cords with which they would bind the righteous He cuts into pieces, so that they can do nothing against them—“He has cut asunder the cords of the wicked.”  
5. Let them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion. So it seems that the one aimed at and made to suffer is the Church of God— “Zion.” She has often been scourged and afflicted! Her experience is like that of her Covenant Head, and her triumph will be like His triumph.  
6-8. Let them be as the grass on the housetops, which withers before it grows up: wherewith the mower fills not his hand; nor he that binds sheaves to his bosom. Neither do they which go by say, The blessing of the LORD be upon you: we bless you in the name of the LORD. So the adversaries of the Church of God may grow as fast as grass on the roof of a house, but they will perish just as fast, and there will be nothing left of them! They threaten, they bully, they rage, they rave—but it is only for a little while. Now we will read the “De Profundis” Psalm.  
Psalm 130:1. Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O LORD. God’s people have to go into the depths and God’s people pray in the depths— and often they pray best in the depths! The rarest pearls lie deepest in the sea and the most precious prayers come out of the depths of affliction—“Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O Lord.” Cannot many of you say the same? Looking back upon your past afflictions and trials, yet you can feel that you did pray in them. He that can pray in the depths will soon sing in the heights! If you can pray, you cannot be drowned by all the seas that roll over you. God who brought you into them will bring you out of them if you can pray.  
2. Lord, Or, “Adonai,” Sovereign Lord—  
2. Hear my voice: let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. “Hear me, Lord!” What is the use of prayer if God does not hear it? It is said to be a profitable spiritual exercise. So it is, because we believe that God hears it! But apart from that, it would be an idle waste of words. “Lord, hear my voice: let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.”  
3. If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? Not one of us, surely! If God were to now deal with us according to our sins, who among us could stand in His Presence?  
4, 5. But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait, and in His Word do I hope. See, this is all in the first person. Dear Friend, can you use it in the first person? Can you say, “I wait for Jehovah”? Blessed are they that are content to wait His will, but yet, with holy eagerness, are prepared to do that will or to suffer it, as He pleases. “My soul does wait, and in His Word do I hope.” All my hope is there. If it were not for His promises I would have no confidence, but one Word of God is better than all the things that can be seen! It is better to trust in God’s declaration than in man’s oaths. It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.  
6. My soul waits for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning. I say, more than they that watch for the morning! Those on the sick bed, who long for their weary waiting to be over. Those afflicted ones who cry in the night of pain, “Would God it were morning!” Those, too, that stand as sentinels, the night before the battle, or after the fight, watch and long to see the morning light. There are many such weary waiters and my soul is one of them, waiting for the Lord, “more than they that watch for the morning.”  
7. Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption. Enough to buy us back from all our slavery and to buy back our inheritance as well. Our Redeemer is the redeemer of the inheritance that has been mortgaged and now is burdened by the enormous debt of sin—“with Him is plenteous redemption.”  
8. And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities. That is our worst slavery, our in-equities, our lack of equity, our having acted unfairly to God and unfairly to man. He will redeem us from all that evil—yes, He has redeemed us by price—and He will redeem us by power!  
Psalm 131:1. LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. I commend this verse to some who profess to be Christians, but who are always puzzling their poor brains with intricate questions—who want to solve the mystery of where free will and predestination can meet, how man can be responsible and yet God’s predestination can be fulfilled— and I know not what beside! These are great waters the waves whereof are too big for our little boats! We have quite enough to do, my Brothers, to attend to the plain things of God’s Word, and to strive after holiness and the salvation of our fellow men, without addicting ourselves to tying knots and trying to untie them! It is an unprofitable business—it genders to pride rather than to anything else—and well did David say, “My heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty, neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.”

2. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child. That is a very blessed thing to be able to do, to quiet yourself when, like a weaned child, you are crying under the afflicting hand of God—when you feel a proud spirit murmuring, or when you want to pierce the darkness that veils Divine Truth and want to understand what cannot be understood—and you worry because you are not Omniscient. Oh, it is a blessed thing, then, to say to yourself, “Be quiet, child! Be quiet!” What are you but a child, after all, at your best? What do you know? What can you know? Are you not satisfied to hear your Father say, “What you know not now, you shall know hereafter”? Do you not know that here we know but in part, and see but in part? By-and-by, we shall know even as we are known, but not yet. “I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother”—as a child who sucks his thumb and goes to sleep, sobbing— “my soul is even as a weaned child.” David did not say, “My soul is even as a weaning child”—fretting, worrying, wanting to have its own will. There is no happiness in that state! But when it is not the, “ing,” but the, “ed”—not the present participle, but the past—then we get into comfort! “My soul is even as a weaned child,” who has given up his old comfort, which he thought was as necessary to him as his life. He finds that, after all, he can live without it, and grow without it, and come to a better manhood without it than with it! “My soul is even as a weaned child.”

3. Let Israel hope in the LORD—You will never be weaned from Him if you are His, but if you are weaned from the world, so as to have all your hope in the Lord, thrice happy are you! Now, too, you will grow. Now you will come to the fullness of the stature of a man in Christ Jesus which you could never have done if you had not been weaned! I remember that when Sarah weaned Isaac, there was a great feast at the weaning, and I believe that God’s children often have a great feast at their weaning from the world. All the while they are but babes and suck their comforts from the world, they get but little real joy. But when, by Divine Grace, they outgrow that state of things, then is there a great feast made for them!

3. From henceforth and forever. That is real comfort that you may always enjoy, hoping in the Lord from henceforth and forever! In life and in death here is a blessed confidence that will never fail you! God grant that we may enjoy it now and evermore! Amen.

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FORGIVENESS AND FEAR  
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 26, 1876.

**“There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.” Psalm 130:4.**

THIS is good news, indeed—the best of news—and they will prize it most who are like the Psalmist was when he wrote these words. And who are they?

First, they are those who are in soul-trouble—“Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O Lord.” Some of you may, perhaps, think this subject is a very commonplace one, but the soul that is in deep spiritual trouble will not think so. Bread is a very commonplace thing, but it is very precious to starving men. Liberty is an everyday enjoyment to us, but it would be a great gift to those who are in slavery. O you who are in the depths of soul-trouble, like shipwrecked mariners who seem to be sinking in the trough of the sea, or being dragged down by a whirlpool—this text will bring sweet music to your ears! “There is forgiveness.” There is forgiveness with God.

This good news will also have a peculiar sweetness to those who have begun to pray. Read the second verse—“Lord, hear my voice: let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.” Prayer makes men value spiritual blessings. They are asking for them. They are sincerely seeking them. They are knocking loudly at Mercy’s gate in order to obtain them. And they who are in earnest in their prayers prove that they value the blessing they are seeking and they are delighted to hear that they are likely to secure it. Oh, that it might be said, for the first time, of someone here, “Behold, he prays.” I am sure that such an one will be right glad to listen to even the simplest language that tells out these glad tidings— “There is forgiveness with God.”

And if, to soul-trouble and earnest prayer, there should be added a very deep sense of sin amounting, even, to utter self-condemnation, then I am quite certain that there is no carol that will have sweeter music in it than my text has! Read the third verse and see if you can truly repeat it—“If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?” Do you feel that your iniquities condemn you? Are you compelled to plead guilty before God? Well, then, though you cannot claim acquittal on the ground that you have no sins, yet here is the blessed information that there is forgiveness for sinners! Stand in the dock where the guilty ought to stand and let the Judge condemn you. No, spare Him the trouble— condemn yourself and, when you have done so, and have also trusted the great Atonement made by His dear Son, He will say to you, “There is forgiveness. Be of good cheer—your sins, which are many, are all forgiven you.” I do not expect to say anything to delight deaf ears, but I do believe that the simple tidings I have to tell will have great weight with those who are in soul-trouble, with those who have begun to pray—and those who are self-condemned on account of sin.

I am going to take the text thus. First, here is a most cheering announcement—“There is forgiveness with You.” Secondly, here is a most admirable design—“That You may be feared.”

I. First, here is A MOST CHEERING ANNOUNCEMENT—“There is forgiveness with You.”  
This announcement has great force and value because it is most certainly true. When a man hears some news which pleases him, he loses that pleasure if he has reason to suspect that it is not true. The first questions you ask, when someone tells you of some good fortune that concerns you, are of this sort, “Are you quite sure it is so? Can you give me good authority for your assertion?”  
Well, this news is certainly true, for it is consistent with God’s very Nature. He is a gracious God. “He delights in mercy.” Mercy was the last of His attributes that He was able to reveal. He could be great and good when the world was made, but He could not be merciful until sin had marred His perfect handiwork. There must be an offense committed before there can be mercy displayed towards the offender. Mercy, then, I may say, is God’s Benjamin—His last-born, His favored one, the son of His right hand. I never read that He delights in power, or that He delights in justice, but I do read, “He delights in mercy.” It is the attribute that is sweetest to Himself to exercise. When He goes forth to punish, as He must, His feet are, as it were, shod with iron—but when He comes to manifest His mercy, He rides, as David says, “upon the wings of the wind.” He delights to be gracious and, therefore, I feel sure that there is forgiveness with Him.  
We are even more sure that it is so when we remember that God has given us the best pledge of forgiveness by giving us His dear Son. He could not be merciful at the expense of His justice, for His Throne is established in righteousness and that righteousness requires that He should by no means spare the guilty. How, then, could He display His Grace and mercy and yet be the just God? He did it thus. The offended One took the nature and the place of the offenders and here, on this earth, Jesus of Nazareth, who was “very God of very God,” suffered all that we had brought upon ourselves, that the Law of God might be honored by executing its full penalty and yet that the Free Grace and mighty mercy of God might be equally manifest. If any of you doubt whether there is forgiveness with God, I pray you to stand on Calvary, in imagination, and to look into the wounds of Jesus. Gaze upon His nail-pierced hands and feet, His thorn-crowned brow, and look right into His heart where the soldier’s spear was thrust—and blood and water flowed out for the double cleansing of all who trust Him. O Christ of God, it could not be that You should die and yet that sinners cannot be forgiven! It would be a monstrous thing that You should have bled to death and yet that no sinner should be saved by that death! It cannot be—there must be forgiveness—there is forgiveness since Jesus died, “the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.”  
Moreover, we have God’s promise of forgiveness, as well as the gift of His Son. His Word says, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” It is declared by the Apostle John, under the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses from all sin. Many other passages in the Bible teach the same glorious Truth—“Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My own sake, and will not remember your sins.” “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins: return unto Me, for I have redeemed you.” Time would fail me to mention all the Lord’s promises of forgiveness, they are so many. And remember that it is the God who cannot lie who has given the promises, so you may be sure that they are all true and that there is forgiveness with Him!  
We are certain, also, that there is forgiveness, because there is a Gospel, and the very essence of the Gospel lies in the proclamation of the pardon of sin. The Lord Jesus said to His disciples, “Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” But no one can be saved without sin being pardoned—therefore, there is pardon for the sin of everyone who believes and is baptized according to the Gospel command. Christ’s ministers may all go home, for their office is useless, if there is no forgiveness of sins! We may shut up all our houses of prayer, for it is a mockery to God and man to keep them open if there is no forgiveness of sins! We may abolish the Mercy Seat, itself, and burn this blessed Bible if there is no forgiveness of sins! What value can there be in the means of Grace—what can be the use or signification of any Gospel at all—if sin is not pardonable? But it can be pardoned! There is forgiveness. If you want evidence in confirmation of that declaration, there are hundreds of us who are prepared to prove that we have been forgiven—and there are hundreds of thousands, now alive, who know that their sins have been pardoned and that they have been absolved from all their guilt for Christ’s sake! And there are millions of millions, beyond all count, before yon burning Throne of God who continually praise Him who loved them and washed them from their sins in His own blood!  
I bear my own personal testimony that I know there is forgiveness, for I have been forgiven. If it were the proper time to do so, I would ask all here who know that their sins have been forgiven, to stand up. If I did so, some of you would be astonished to see how great an army of men and women in this Tabernacle would declare that they, also, have been saved by Grace, and that they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb! Unless we are all deceived—and we are not, for we have the witness of the Spirit of God within us that we are not—and unless all who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished, there is forgiveness with God! This fact should make us very joyous because it is so certain. There is no need to dispute it—I hope none of you will do so. If any of you doubt it, I beg you to come and test it and try it for yourselves and, with the blessing of God, you will say with the Psalmist, “There is forgiveness.”

This fact gathers additional sweetness from another source, namely, that the declaration is in the present tense. “There is forgiveness.” When? Now—at this moment there is forgiveness. Possibly you are 80 years of age, but there is forgiveness. Or you may be very young—a little boy or girl, but there is forgiveness for the young as well as for the old! You tell me that you have already rejected many invitations? Yes, but there is forgiveness. It is to be had now, blessed be God, for, “behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” Believe right now in Jesus Christ, God’s Son, and you have forgiveness now—in a moment! It takes no appreciable period of time for God to forgive sin. Swifter than the lightning flash is the glance from the eye of God that conveys peace and pardon to the soul that trusts in Jesus! You would need time to get a pardon signed and sealed by an earthly monarch, but time is out of the question with the God of Everlasting Love. A sigh, a groan, a genuine confession of sin, a believing glance of the eye to Christ on Calvary—and all is done—your sin has passed away, there is forgiveness and you have received it! Therefore, go and rejoice in it!  
You must not forget to notice, however, that this is a fact which refers to God Himself—“There is forgiveness with You”—and with nobody else. I charge you to spurn, with the utmost indignation, the so-called “absolution” by a so-called “priest,” whether of the Church of England or the Church of Rome! Such absolution as that is not worth the foul breath that utters it! I marvel, sometimes, how any man can ever, apparently, delude himself and try to deceive his sinful fellow creature by daring to say, “I forgive you your sins.” I suppose it is use and habit that makes men do strange things at which an unsophisticated conscience shudders, but, to me, the blasphemer’s coarse oath that makes my blood curdle as I go down the street has not half the iniquity in it of the man who deliberately puts on certain specified vestments, claims to be a priest of the Most High God, and then says to a sinner like himself, “I absolve you.” I think the time has come when all Christians ought, in every way they can, to shake themselves from these abominable priestcraft and lies altogether! The very dress we wear, the very position we occupy in the congregation, should be a protest against this wickedness in the sight of God—for wickedness it is, of the most extreme kind—though I believe the perpetrators of it do not always know what they do, so we may pray, “Father, forgive them and open their blind eyes.”  
Go, Sinner, straight to God for pardon, through Jesus Christ! But never, never, go to man! As to confessing your sins to a man—pouring the dirty sewage of your filthy nature into another man’s ear and making that ear the common cesspool of the parish—oh, that is intolerable even to ordinary decency—and much more to the purity which the Grace of God suggests! Go to Jesus, the one Mediator between God and men! Go and kiss His pierced hands and feet, and confess your sin to Him who made the propitiation for it! But go nowhere else, I charge you, at your soul’s peril—lest, like Judas, who first went and confessed to a priest and afterwards went out and hanged himself, you should be driven to despair and a similar awful suicide! O God, as “there is forgiveness with You,” deliver Your poor fallen creatures from the further dreadful degradation of bowing themselves down before sinners like themselves, confessing their sins and seeking pardon where it cannot be found! There is forgiveness, but that forgiveness is only to be obtained from God, through Jesus Christ, His Son.  
Notice, next, in the text, the unlimited character of this forgiveness— “There is forgiveness with You.” You see, there is no word to limit it—it does not say that there is forgiveness only for a certain number—there is no such restriction as that. Nor does it say that there is forgiveness only for a certain sort of sin—there is no such limit as that. Nor is it said, “There is forgiveness up to a certain point, or forgiveness up to a certain date.” No, but the declaration, “there is forgiveness with You,” stands out in all its glorious fullness and simplicity, with no abridging or qualifying words whatever. Do not, poor Sinner, put a limit where God puts none, but build your hope of pardon and salvation on this declaration and go to God, through Jesus Christ, and you shall find that there is forgiveness for you—even for you, at this very hour! I pray that you may prove it to be so.  
Let me also add that the forgiveness which God gives to a sinner is complete. He blots out all sin. It is also sincere. He really does forgive when He says that He does. It is lasting, too. God does not forgive us today and accuse us again tomorrow. No, let me give you a better word than lasting—God’s forgiveness is everlasting. He who is once forgiven is forgiven to all eternity! Forgiveness is one of the gifts of God that are without change—He never gives it and then regrets that He has done so. If you get forgiveness from God, you have the first link in an endless chain of mercies. You shall become God’s child—His beloved. He will teach you, care for you, keep you, sanctify you, bless you, perfect you and, in due time, bring you to Heaven! Oh, the heap of blessedness which lie in this one gracious gift of God—the forgiveness of sins! I wish that, by any power of mine, I could induce all of you to seek this forgiveness. No, I retract that expression—I do not wish that any power of mine should do it, lest I should have the honor of it—but I do pray that God’s power may do it for all of you—that you may be made conscious of sin, believe in Jesus Christ and so find that perfect pardon which God is waiting and willing to give to all who trust His Son!  
II. Now I pass on to the second part of our subject which is A MOST ADMIRABLE DESIGN—There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.” How does forgiveness cause men to fear God?  
First, it is clear that God’s design in proclaiming forgiveness is the opposite of what some men have said and thought. We have known many who have said, “There is forgiveness, so let us keep on sinning.” Others, not quite so base, have said, “There is forgiveness, so we can have it whenever we please.” Holding this idea, they have trifled with sin and they have delayed to seek forgiveness, drawing—oh, I am ashamed to say it of my fellow men!—drawing the infamous inference that, as God is merciful, they may live in sin as long as they like and then find mercy at the last! I would like any man who has adopted that strangely cruel and wicked way of dealing with God’s mercy to look straight at it for a minute. I think that if I had a friend whom I had grieved and I knew that he was ready to forgive me, I would not, therefore, put off the reconciliation and so grieve him still more! I would be very base, indeed, if I acted like that! Or if I were a child and I had vexed my father, but he was very gentle and forgiving, I think that if I were to say, “It does not matter much—father will forgive me whenever I ask him, so I shall not ask him for months, or perhaps years.” If I did talk so, it would be very base on my part. I ask you, Brothers and Sisters, not to talk so and not to act so. It is not fair and just treatment of our gracious God! It is not even worthy of man. Why, if even a beast is treated kindly, it will scarcely return a kick for kindness. Some perverse animals will do that, but most will generally, at length, yield to kindness. And the long-suffering of God ought much more to lead you to repentance and not induce you to continue in your sins.  
This design of God is quite contrary to what some other men have said would naturally arise out of the Doctrine of Free and Full Forgiveness. So-called “priests” have said, “If men can have pardon by simply believing in Jesus, they will cast off all restraint, so, let us keep them under our thumb—tell them that there are certain ‘sacraments’ that they must attend and that they must look up to us and then we will get them into Purgatory. And then, when sufficient money is paid to us, we will get them out.” But pardon—free pardon, perfect pardon, pardon given on the spot to simple faith—they tell us that this would tend to demoralize people! Well, that is a subject on which they can speak, for nobody has demoralized people more than so-called “priests” have done! But it is evident that God does not agree with them. It is written here, by the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, “There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared,” so that, instead of destroying any man’s fear, or reverence, or religion, the gift of a free pardon is to be the very means of producing such a condition of heart and life! Let us look at this point for a minute or two.  
In the first place, if there were no pardon, it is quite certain that nobody would fear God at all. There is no forgiveness for the devil and all his legions—and there is not a devil that has any reverence or love or adoration for God. No, they abide in sullen despair. They know that there is no hope for them and, being shut up to despair because their sin is unpardonable, they rage and rave against the God of Heaven! You never read of a devil on his knees in prayer. Whoever heard of a devil saying, “Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice: let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications”? And why do the devils not pray like that? Why, because, among other reasons, there is no forgiveness for devils and, therefore, none of the right kind of fear of God! They tremble, I grant you. They have a certain sort of dread and, without pardon, there may be a dread and horror of God. But that is not what our text means, for the fear of God, in Scripture, does not signify dread— it signifies true religion, holy reverence and awe—“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” And, unless there is pardon of sin, it is clear that its absence drives the sinners to despair and prevents them from worshipping God.

Again, if there were no pardon, there would be nobody to fear God, for, Brothers and Sisters, if God had not had mercy upon us, He would long ago have swept us away! It is mercy—even if it is not pardoning mercy, it is mercy—which permits us to live! If God had no pardon for any of the whole human race, there would be no necessity for reprieving men at all—the tree of humanity would long since have been cut down as a cumberer of the ground.  
Now turn to the positive side of this subject. When the Gospel is faithfully preached and attentively heard, the very hearing of it, under the blessing of the Holy Spirit, breeds faith in the soul, for “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” But, Brothers, suppose we had no pardon to preach—would there be any faith? Could there be any faith then? Have you ever heard of a man who believed in an unpardoning god? Did anybody ever yet hear of a sinner believing in a god who manifests no mercy and bestows no forgiveness? Only the heathen trust to such gods, which are no gods! The very fact that pardon is proclaimed and carried to the heart by the power of the Holy Spirit, produces faith in the soul—and faith is the root and foundation of all true fear of God.  
After faith comes repentance, or, rather, repentance is faith’s twin brother and is born at the same time. Nobody ever repented until he heard of pardon. Let a man be certain that he cannot be pardoned and you may be quite sure that he will not repent. He may feel remorse. He may regret and lament his sin because of the penalty which follows it, but that gentle softening of the soul which makes us hate sin because it is committed against such a good and gracious God is not possible until, first of all, the heart has believed that there is forgiveness with God. Evangelical repentance is one of the fruits of the Gospel of forgiveness and no other tree can produce it. So, you see, Beloved, that because there is forgiveness, men exercise faith and they also experience repentance—and these two Divine Graces are a very large part of what is meant by the Scriptural term, “the fear of the Lord.”  
It is also the good news of pardon that inclines the heart to prayer. You would never have heard of a man praying for mercy if there had been no mercy to be obtained! If Jesus had never died and the Gospel had never been sent into the world—if there had been no proclamation of pardon, it would never have been said of Saul of Tarsus, “Behold, he prays.” No, prayer arises in the soul as a result of the telling of the glad tidings that pardon is to be had. And prayer, like faith and repentance, is a large part of “the fear of the Lord.” The man who truly prays is certainly one who fears God.  
When a man really receives the pardon of all his sins, he is the man who fears the Lord. This is clearly the case, for pardon breeds love in the soul and the more a man is forgiven, the more he loves. Where great sin has been blotted out, there comes to be great love. Well, is not love the very core of the true fear of God? If a man really loves God, has he not discovered the very essence of true religion? But how could he love God if there was no pardon to be had?  
Pardon also breeds obedience. A man says, “Have I been forgiven? Then I will seek to avoid all sin in the future. Out of love to God I will labor to do that which He bids me do.” And, surely, obedience is a very large part of the fear of God.  
And, oftentimes, this forgiving love of God breeds in the soul deep devotion and intense consecration to Him. There have lived and there are living now, men and women who have given their whole selves to Jesus, many of whom are laboring for Him even beyond their strength—yes, and many such men and women have died, for His sake, the most cruel deaths, without shrinking back or seeking to escape that terrible cross. Where came such a fear of God as that? Why, it could never have come into their hearts if they had not received the forgiveness of their sins for Christ’s sake, but, having been forgiven, they came to love and fear—not with a servile fear, but with a holy awe—the Blessed One through whose precious blood they have been cleansed! Thus forgiveness of sin is essential to true fear of God—and wherever it is enjoyed, it is the main motive which moves them to fear God and brings them into that blessed condition. Is not that clear to all of you?  
I finish my discourse by asking and trying to answer this question—As there is forgiveness to be had, why should YOU not have it? I may not be able to point “you” out, though, often, God does direct my finger, or eye, or word, to the very person for whom there is forgiveness. So I ask again—As there is forgiveness to be had, why should you not have it? Young man under the gallery, why should you not have it? Young woman down in that area, why should you not have it? Suppose you should never get it? Suppose you should die without being forgiven? Oh, that would greatly aggravate all the ordinary pains of death! If you die unpardoned, your doom will be the more terrible because there is forgiveness with God, yet it is of no use to you!  
One of my predecessors, Dr. Rippon, had considerable influence with the government of his day. Those were what some foolish people call, “the good old days,” when they used to hang people on a Monday morning, as a regular thing, and take little notice of it. It so happened that one who was related to a former member of this church was condemned to die. It was believed that he was innocent, so there was much intercession offered on his behalf to the government—and a pardon was granted and signed by King George III. Very Providentially, it happened that one of the members of the church, going to the prison, said to the governor, “I hear that you have eight prisoners to hang tomorrow.” He answered, “I have nine for tomorrow.” “No,” said the other, “there were nine, but one of them has been pardoned.” “I know nothing about that,” said the governor, “I have received no pardon and, unless I do receive one, I shall hang him tomorrow morning.”  
The news came to Dr. Rippon, and he took the post chaise [a closed, four-wheeled, horse-drawn carriage, formerly used to transport mail and passengers]—in those times, that was the only way of travelling—and rode down to Windsor. He went to the castle and, by dint of that modesty which is always becoming in a minister of the Gospel, if it is not carried too far, he pushed himself in and demanded to see the king! He managed, at last, to get to the ante-room, next to the one where His Majesty was sleeping. Hearing a noise, the king asked, “What is that?” His attendant answered, “Here is a Dr. Rippon who says he must see Your Majesty.” “Show him in, then,” he said, and Dr. Rippon saw the king in bed and said to him, “Your Majesty gave a pardon to such-and-such a man.” “Yes, I know I did.” “But they have not got it at the prison and the man is going to be hanged in the morning if I do not get back to London in time.” So the king posted the good doctor back with another pardon—and the man was saved!  
Suppose he had been hanged? What would his parents have said? Well, they might have said, “There was forgiveness, yet he was hanged.” I think that would have been the bitterest ingredient in their grief—that they had obtained forgiveness for him and yet, after all, that he was hanged. Happily, it was not so, but, Sirs, as there is pardon to be had—if you will not ask for it—as there is pardon to be had by confessing your sin and believing in Jesus, yet you will not seek it—why, then, when you are lost, you will say to yourself, “Oh, what a fool I was! There was forgiveness, but I neglected to seek it! There was forgiveness, but I did not realize that I needed it, so I have perished by my own folly.” I charge you, men and women, to remember that if you are lost, your doom will be far more terrible than that of those who have never heard the Gospel because you have had the way of salvation plainly set before you and I have again exhorted you, as best I can, to walk in it! Oh, how I wish I could exhort you with more earnestness, and in more persuasive words, but, perhaps even then there would be an equal failure! I implore you, do not put eternal life away from you! Do not refuse the pardon that the Lord Jesus Christ presents to all who trust Him! Trust Him, I pray you, trust Him now! And the pardon shall be yours.  
“But,” says someone, “I am afraid of what I may do in the future. If I were forgiven now, I am afraid I should again act just as I have done before.” Well, then, take the text as a whole—“There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.” If you receive the forgiveness of God, you will have the fear of God put into your heart at the same time, for this is a part of the ancient Covenant—“I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me.” “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.” Poor Sinner, here is a wonder of Grace for you—the past forgiven and the future guaranteed by a wondrous miracle of mercy worked within your heart—making you a new creature in Christ Jesus!  
Blessed Spirit, apply this message to the Lord’s own chosen ones and save many precious souls through it, for the Redeemer’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALMS 32; 130.**

Psalm 32:1. Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. No man knows the blessedness of pardoned sin but the man who has felt the weight of guilt upon his conscience. If you have ever been burdened and crushed under a load of sin, it will be a joy worth more than ten thousand worlds for you to get the burden lifted from your shoulders! “Blessed”—blessed beyond description—“is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.”

2. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputes not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. He has no need to dissemble, for his sin is forgiven. David had tried to tamper with his conscience after his great sin. He invented all sorts of excuses and schemes to try to hide his guilt, but when, at last, he was fully convinced of the awful sinfulness of his sin, and when God had put it away forever—then—when the guilt was gone, the guile went, too.

3, 4. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me: my vitality was turned into the drought of summer. Selah. As if he was parched and scorched with inward grief. The agony of his soul kept him from sleeping, prevented him from taking his necessary food and made him seem like a prematurely old man.

5. I acknowledged my sin unto You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah. O blessed termination of a terrible condition of heart! Confession pulled up the floodgates of his soul and God caused the black stream to flow away and disappear! Friend, are you trying to conceal any sin or to excuse yourself in any wrong course? Then your soul will fret and worry more and more. But make a clean breast of it before God—in the humblest and most honest language you can use—and then you shall receive the Lord’s full and free forgiveness!

6. For this shall everyone who 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. A man who can pray shall see even the ocean driven back, as Moses did! If you get near to God and stay near to Him, the floods of great waters shall never get near to you.

7. You are my hiding place; You shall preserve me from trouble; You shall compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah. The world is full of music to the man to whom God has said, “I forgive you.” Do not rest, dear Friend, till you really know that you are forgiven, for if you do, you will rest short of all true happiness. But if you have sought God’s mercy and had your sin forgiven, you are already at the gates of Heaven!

8. I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go: I will guide you with My eye. When God forgives, He also sanctifies. When He has brought back the sheep that wandered off into the wrong road, He afterwards leads it in the right track. Notice how the Lord says, “I will guide you with My eye.” A look from the Lord ought to be enough to guide us—we should not need a blow, nor even a word, but be ready to be directed by the very gentlest monition of God’s gracious Spirit.

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. Do not be difficult to manage. Be not hard-mouthed. Be ready to be guided by the eye of God. Be not like stubborn beasts that must be held in with bit and bridle—and that often need the whip, too.

10. Many sorrows shall be to the wicked. Wicked man, that is the portion that is to come to you—and it will surely come to you if you continue in your present evil course. This is the title deed of your future inheritance—do you like the prospect of such a possession as that? “Many sorrows shall be to the wicked.”

10, 11. 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. Let your joy be demonstrative! Do not be ashamed to let others see how happy you are. The Lord has done great things for you—therefore, “be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, you righteous, and shout for joy, all you that are upright in heart.” Be so jubilant that others shall be compelled to glorify God with you and to ask, “May not we also share this great blessing with you?”

Psalm 130:1. Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O LORD. “Sinking, sinking, sinking—drowning, dying—hope all but gone, almost everything gone—yet I have cried unto You with much fear and little hope. ‘Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O Lord.’”

2, 3. Lord, hear my voice: let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? Judged by ourselves, on the ground of absolute justice, none of us can hope to stand before His Judgment Seat without being condemned. I trust that we all know and feel that this is true.

4, 5. But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait, and in His word do I hope. Never yet has any poor soul perished that could use such language as this! It may be a long while before you get the full comfort of all the Lord’s promises, but you are sure to have it, sooner or later, if you can but hope “in His Word.” Well did good John Newton sing—

*“Rejoice, Believer, in the Lord,  
Who makes your cause His own!  
The hope that’s built upon His Word  
Can never be overthrown!”*

6-8. My soul waits for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning. Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all her iniquities. Children of God, plead that precious promise—“He shall redeem Israel from all her iniquities.” And never rest till you are fully freed from the bondage of sin, for God will work a perfect work in you and then He will take you Home to be with Him forevermore!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—202, 556, 559.  
—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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FORGIVENESS  
NO. 2972

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 25,1906.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 21, 1863.

**“But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.” Psalm 130:4.**

How significant is that word, “but,” in our text! It is as if you heard Justice clamoring, “Let the sinner die,” and the fiends in Hell howling, “Cast him down into the fires,” and Conscience shrieking, “Let him perish,” and Nature, itself, groaning beneath his weight, the earth weary with carrying him, the sun tired with shining upon the traitor, the very air sick with finding breath for one who only spends it in disobedience to God! The man is about to be destroyed, to be swallowed up, when suddenly there comes this thrice-blessed, “but,” which stops the reckless course of ruin, puts its strong hand, bearing a golden shield, between the sinner and destruction and pronounces these words, “But there is forgiveness with God, that He may be feared.”

Suppose the question had been left open—forgiveness or no forgiveness? We know that we have offended God, but suppose it had been left a moot point for us to find out, if possible, whether there was any forgiveness? Where could we find it? We might turn to the works of God in Nature, and say, “Well, He is good, who loads the trees with fruit and bids the fields yield so plenteous a harvest.” But when we remember how His lightning sometimes strikes the oak and how His hurricanes swallow up whole navies in the deep, we shall be ready to say that He is terrible as well as tender—and we might be puzzled to know whether He would or would not forgive sin, more especially as we see all creatures die and no exception made to that rule. If we knew that death was a punishment for sin, we should be led to fear that there was no forgiveness to be had from the hand of God! But when we turn to this open page which God has so graciously written for our instruction, we are left in doubt no longer, for here we have it positively declared, “There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.” Exclusively in the Bible is this Revelation made, but the words of my text are not exclusive. The page is but one among a thousand echoes from the Throne of God which proclaim His willingness to save sinners!

In attempting to bring this great doctrine of the possibility of pardon before the mind of the sinner tonight, I shall handle it in two or three ways. First, I shall try to prove it is so, that he may be sure of the fact. I shall then try to attract him to accept this doctrine by dwelling upon the pardon, itself, hoping that the Spirit of God may work with my words. And before I have done, I shall notice what will be the sure result of this pardon—whenever a man has been forgiven through the mercy of God, he is then enabled to fear the Lord and to worship Him in an able manner.

I. By way of assurance, O MAN, THERE IS FORGIVENESS FOR YOUR SINS, WHATEVER THEY MAY HAVE BEEN! However sinful your life may have been up until now, there is forgiveness with God even for you! God’s bare Word ought to be enough for you, but since the Spirit of God and your conscience have shown you something of your sins, and since you will be desponding and full of doubts, it will be well for me to give you something more than the bare Word of God to make you confident there is forgiveness with Him.

Follow me, I pray you, back to the garden where your parents and mine first sinned. It was the greatest sin that was ever committed, with the exception of the murder of our Lord and Savior—the sin when Adam knowingly and wittingly rebelled against the one gentle command which his Master had given him as a sign of his obedience. This was the mother-sin from which all other sins have sprung—the well from which the great river of iniquity, which drowned the world, first streamed. What did the Lord say when this sin was committed? Did He lift His angry hand and smite the guilty pair at once? Did He visit our first parents with a curse that withered them and sent them down to their eternal portion in the Pit? He cursed, but it was the ground. He spoke in angry terms, but the serpent felt the weight thereof. As for man, though God pronounced a sentence upon him that we call a curse, but which has been transformed into a blessing, yet He gave that matchless promise which is the mother of all promises, “The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head.” In that one single promise that God, Himself, would provide a Deliverer by whom the tempter would be destroyed and all his craft would be foiled, I see written as clearly as with a sunbeam that God meant to have mercy upon me! He would not talk about the Seed of the woman bruising the serpent’s head if He had not intended something comforting for you and for me. The fact, I say, that though He did drive our first parents out of Eden, He did not drive them down to Hell—that though He did banish them from Paradise, He did not immediately consign them to the flames of His wrath—that He did, then and there, give them a bright promise which for many a hundred years was the only one that covered the thick darkness of the Fall—that fact alone should make you hope that there is forgiveness with God!

But what, I pray you, do those many altars with lambs and bullocks smoking upon them mean—altars whose unhewn stones are dyed crimson with gore? Above all, what does that priestly man, wearing that jeweled breastplate, who comes forward in obedience to God and offers every morning and evening a lamb, mean? Or what does it mean that once in the year he produces a scapegoat which carries the sins of the people into the wilderness? What do those rivers of blood and those mounds of ashes from the altar mean, if God does not forgive sin? There can be no meaning whatever in all the long and gorgeous pageant of the Jewish religion unless it taught to every onlooker this great and solemn lesson—that though God is just and blood must be shed, yet God is gracious and accepts a substitute that the sinner may go free! By all those smoking altars, the blood of rams, lambs, goats and bullocks, believe, O Sinner, that God has found a Ransom and a Sacrifice and that He, therefore, can and will pardon sin!

If you see these things dimly, here, you will see them more clearly in another fact. Do you not know, O man, that God has commanded you to repent? The times of former ignorance God winked at, but now He commands all men everywhere to repent. What for? Surely He would not command us to repent and then intend to punish us afterwards! It could not be possible that God would woo sinners to return to Him and yet not intend to forgive them! I cannot believe a theory so monstrous as that God would send His ministers and send His own Book—and earnestly and affectionately invite sinners to turn from their evil ways and repent of their sins—and yet intend, even if they did repent, to punish them on account of their iniquity! It cannot be!

Do you not know, too, that God has commanded you to pray for forgiveness? What is the meaning of that prayer, “Forgive us our sins, as we also forgive everyone that is indebted to us”? Would Christ put these words into your mouth if there were no pardon? Would He teach you to ask for forgiveness if forgiveness were an impossibility? Does God mock men? Does He teach beggars to beg when He intends to refuse? Does He bring you down on your knees that He may see you mourn—and laugh at your despair? Does He intend to see you rolling in the dust, girt with sackcloth and ashes, that He may afterwards put His iron heel upon your neck and crush you to the lowest Hell? It is not possible! The God who commands you to repent is just and merciful to forgive you your sins—and He who has bid you seek His face has not said unto the seed of Jacob, “Seek you me in vain.”

Moreover, Sinner—and here we come to something still clearer—do you not know that Jesus died? Have you not heard the wondrous story how the Son of God came down from Heaven and was made in the likeness of sinful flesh? Do you not know that after 30 years of holy life, wherein He rendered perfect obedience to the Divine Law and made it honorable, He took upon Himself the guilt, the crimes, the iniquities of a multitude that no man can number, for He bore the sins of many, and now He makes intercession for the transgressors? See there, if you can dare to look amidst those moonlit olives where upon the ground there kneels a Man—no, more, there kneels Incarnate Deity—what does it mean that His head, His hair, His garments are saturated with blood? How came it that, on yonder ground, I see great clots of gore—where did they come from? Came they from His forehead? But what could have forced them from Him? What does yonder sight mean? I watch that Man dragged away and charged most infamously with crimes He never knew, tied to a pillar and there lashed with a Roman scourge until the white bones stand out like islands of ivory amidst a sea of coral—and His whole back has become a stream of blood! What does it all mean?

And yonder sight where He is stretched upon the transverse wood, where the nails have pierced His hands and feet, and where His life goes oozing from Him in anguish and extreme agony? What does that shriek of “Eli, Eli, lama Sabachthani” mean? He is a just Man—does God punish the just? He is God’s dear Son, and has done no ill—does God hate Him and punish Him for nothing? Does He pour wrath upon Him without a cause? You know how it was. The sin of man was imputed to Christ. The iniquity of His people was laid upon Him. “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.” And here is the riddle solved—He dies that we may live—

*“He bore that we might never bear,*

*His Father’s righteous ire.”*  
Then there must be forgiveness! I cannot see a bleeding Savior without understanding that there must be pardon! Gethsemane, Gabbatha, Golgotha—three sacred words, three irresistible arguments by which it is proved beyond controversy that there is forgiveness even for the chief of sinners!

But if this contents you not, O troubled Sinner, here is another fact for you to reflect upon—what multitudes have already been pardoned! Dare you look up yonder beyond the skies? Have you strength of eyesight enough to see that multitude clothed in white, who, today, are standing before the Throne of God? If there were no forgiveness, not one of them had been there! Were their robes always white? Listen to their answer— “We have washed our robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, therefore are we before the Throne of God.” FORGIVENESS brought them there! Not one redeemed soul would ever have seen the everlasting Glory unless it had been for the pardoning mercy of God—

*“Round the altar priests confess  
If their robes are white as snow,  
‘Twas the Savior’s righteousness,  
And His blood that made them so!  
Who were these? On earth they dwelt  
Sinners once of Adam’s race—  
Guilt, and fear, and suffering felt,  
But were saved by Sovereign Grace!”*

Here are scores and hundreds of us who bear witness that God has pardoned us! Whatever I may doubt, I dare not doubt my pardon in Christ Jesus. There are moments when one has to look well to one’s evidences and come to Jesus Christ again—but this one thing I know— that Christ says, “He that believes on Me is not condemned.” And I do believe on Him! If I have an existence, I know that I am trusting the Lord Jesus Christ! And if so, then I am pardoned. And oh, how sweet it is to know this! What peace it gives! I can look forward to living or to dying with equal delight now that I can say, “My sin is forgiven.” You can say, as I often do, in these sweet words of Kent—

*“Now freed from sin, I walk at large,  
My Savior’s blood my full discharge.  
At His dear feet my soul I lay,  
A sinner saved, and homage pay.”*

Do you know what it is to be forgiven, young man? If you do not, you have not tasted the sweetest thing out of Heaven! Oh, it is such joy! Angels hardly have ever tasted a joy that exceeds the bliss of having sins put away. It yields a calm so deep, so profound, that it can only be called, “the peace of God which passes all understanding.”

I have thus tried to bring forward the great Truth of God that there is forgiveness with Him. And let me say, before I leave this point, that you will please remember that we have warrant in God’s Word for saying that there is forgiveness for you. However great your sins may have been, with but one exception—there is the sin against the Holy Spirit which, if you have any tenderness left in your conscience, you have not committed— but, apart from that, “all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” I wish I could go round these galleries and to these pews, and find out where the aching hearts were. Perhaps I would find one who said, “O Sir, I never attended a place of worship for 20 or 30 years—can I be pardoned?” I would say, “Yes, there is forgiveness for you!” Another might say, “Why, I cursed God to His face! I have dared Him to damn my soul! Can I really be forgiven?” I will answer, in the words of the text, “There is forgiveness.”

And I might meet another who would say, “But I used to persecute my wife. I have ill-treated my children because they would serve God. Can I, a hardened wretch such as I am—can I be pardoned?” “There is forgiveness.” And I might meet another who would say, “Years ago, I was a high professor, but I became entangled in the world and I have gone bad. Am I not cast out?” And I would say, “There is forgiveness.” But there would be another who would say, “I cannot tell you what my crime is. Will you stoop down and let me whisper it in your ear?” And when I heard the awful words, which I must not tell again, I would still say, before you all, “There is forgiveness.” And though it were murder or adultery—whatever it might have been and however frequently it might have been committed—though the woman were a harlot and the man a practiced thief, yet still we have the same Gospel for every creature— “There is forgiveness.” And though you are 80 or 90 years of age, “There is forgiveness.” Though you have sinned against light and knowledge, against mercy, against God and Christ, His dear Son, yet still—“there is forgiveness.” You have come to the brink of the precipice—O God, I see it! You are just going over—one foot already rests upon nothing and you totter to your fall! O man, let me catch you in my arms and tell you that “there is forgiveness!” One more step and you may be where there is no forgiveness, but where the black and terrible pall of despair shall hang over your soul forever! And it shall be said of you, “There are no acts of pardon passed in that cold grave to which he has gone. He is lost! Lost! Lost forever!”

II. And now, secondly, I SHALL RECOMMEND THIS GRACIOUS FORGIVENESS TO YOUR NOTICE.  
I commend it for its nature. It is a perfect pardon—every sin is blotted out at once—not a few sins, but every sin! Though they are innumerable, they are all gone, they are all gone at once! And it is eternal pardon—they are all gone forever! Once forgiven, they will never be laid to your charge again. They are like the Egyptians in the Red Sea—the depths have covered them, there is not one of them left—the pardon is complete in every respect. I heard one man say of his friend, the other day, when the two had disagreed and I had tried to make it right, “Yes, I forgive him, but.” That is not how God puts it. He has no “buts” in His forgiveness. You sometimes say, “Yes, I forgive him, but I will never trust him again.” Not so the Lord! You make a clean breast in confession and He will give you a clean breast by absolution. He will put all the sin you have committed so wholly away that they shall not be remembered against you any more forever! And this pardon is instantaneous. You know that it takes but a moment to receipt a bill when the debt is paid—and Jesus Christ has paid the debt of every Believer! And all that is to be done is for God to give you the receipt, to write in your heart the word, “JUSTIFIED”—and this He does in a moment! When I think of the nature of this pardon—putting away all sin in a moment, and all the consequences of sin, I feel as if I wish we had a choir of angels here, that they might sing, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.”

Consider too, dear Friends, not only the pardon, itself, but the person to whom it is sent. Remember that it is sent to you. Not to the fallen angels—they were greater than you but, when they fell, they fell without a hope of being restored to the favor of God. It is not sent to the damned in Hell. Oh, what would they not give for it? How would they stretch forward—how would they catch every word! Though they have been there but one moment, they know more of God’s wrath than you and I do and oh, how they would prize the presentation of eternal life in Christ Jesus! It is not sent to them—it is sent to you. You know what you have been. You know something about the hardness of your heart and the sinfulness of your past life—yet God sends this message to you, “There is forgiveness.”  
And I want you to remember who it is that sends the forgiveness. It is the God whom you have offended—that very God whom you may have cursed, whose Sabbath you have broken, whose Book you have despised, at whose ministers you have laughed and whose servants you have persecuted! Yet He says, even He, “There is forgiveness.” And lest you should doubt it, He takes a solemn oath before you all—and God never swears unless there is need for it, and thus He swears—“As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live.” What more can we ask than this? Admire and be attracted by the pardon when you think of who it is that sends it!  
Consider, too, how it comes to you, and by what channel. It comes through the wounds of your best Friend, through the sufferings of Him who gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. “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. Surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.” O Sinner! Will you not be only too glad to lay hold of that which comes to you through so Divine a channel which is marked with the heart’s blood of One who is the Friend of sin even unto death?  
And, then, I pray you to remember that if you do not receive this forgiveness which is preached unto you, there is no other way under Heaven by which you can be saved. Enter by this door or stand shivering outside forever! Bow the knee and kiss the Son, or else He will break you in pieces with His rod, as men break potters’ vessels. “Turn you, turn you from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?” But if you reject this pardon of God, you write your own death warrant and prepare the noose that is to be your souls’ destruction!  
I would to God that I had such powers of persuasion that I might induce you to lay hold of this precious pardon that God presents to you. I know that my pleading is useless unless the Spirit of God shall be pleading, too. But many, many times in this House, while I have been talking about the full, rich Grace of God, some poor soul has felt that there was a message from God in it and I trust, I hope it may be so tonight! Remember that in the message of mercy, I am authorized to leave out no one—I am told to preach it to every creature under Heaven, and I do. There are no terms but just this—that you will take what God freely gives you! Just as when men enlist for soldiers, the soldier does not give the sergeant anything, he takes the shilling. And the way in which your souls are saved is by taking what Christ freely offers to you, freely presents to you—the finished righteousness which He worked out in His life and death! You are to take, not to give! If there are terms, they are very simple. They are put so as to suit the dead in trespasses and sins! Christ comes to you just where you are. You have no power, no spiritual life, no goodness, no tenderness of heart—but Jesus, like the good Samaritan, comes just where you are and He cries in your ear, “Awake, you that sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light.” He bids me say to you, though your hand is withered, “Stretch out your hand.” Power shall go with the command and you shall be made whole!  
I remember the time when if anyone had tried to preach to me full and free forgiveness to be had for nothing, and to be had on the spot, I do believe I would have leaped almost out of my body to have heard it! I have heard, sometimes, of Methodists and Welshmen standing up to dance and I do not wonder at it, if they really do but get the full sense of this, that the big, black, foul villain of a sinner—the moment he trusts Jesus Christ—is forgiven, is a child of God and is accepted! Why, it sounds too good to be true! And it could not be true if it came only from me, for I am but a man and can only think and act as a man! But because it comes from the true God and it is just like Him, because it accords with His attributes of loving kindness and truth, therefore we know it is true. “I am God, and not man,” He says, and He gives that as a reason for His mercy. Why, if His love were not as much superior to ours as the heavens are above His earth, there would never be mercy presented in any shape, much less in a shape like this! There is nothing asked of you, only that you will just be nothing and let Christ be everything—and take from Christ’s hand that which He freely presents to you—pardon through His precious blood!  
III. Now, dear Friends, I cannot put this Truth of God more plainly than I have done, but I have the last part of the text just to comment a little upon—“There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.”  
You see, the only men that ever fear God are those that are forgiven. Other men may pretend to do it, but they fail to do it. Why I believe that the religion of nine out of ten professing Christians is just this, “I go to church, or I go to chapel, regularly, and I then think I have done very well.” That is what the men think, and the outside world believes that religion is this, “If a man is honest, and sober, and walks righteously, and so on, he goes to Heaven.” But how startling must the sermon of this

morning [See Sermon No. 515, Volume 9—THE SINNER’S ADVOCATE—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] have been to some of these

stuck-up Pharisees when we told them it was not the righteous who would go there, but the sinner! And that the Apostle John did not say, “If any man has done good works, he has an Advocate,” but, “If any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father.” As Martin Luther gloried to put it, “Jesus Christ never died for our good works—they were not worth His dying for! He gave Himself for our sins, according to the Scriptures.” What did our Savior, Himself, say, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

The Lord never has any who really and acceptably fear Him but those who once were sinners and who are led as sinners to accept His pardon—and these are the people that fear Him. Do you want to find a warm-hearted woman who really loves Jesus Christ and who would break the alabaster box for His sake? You will find her in one who may be called “a woman who was a sinner.” Do you want to find a man who would preach Christ’s Word with tears running down his cheeks? You must go and find him among them who once were foul, of whom the Apostles said, “Such were some of you, but you are washed.” When the Lord wanted a man to write the next best book in the world to the Bible— The Pilgrim’s Progress—He did not go to Lambeth Palace for him, and He did not go to any of the fine streets of this city to pick up some moral person. There was a swearing tinker playing at “cat” on Sunday on Elstow-Green, and the Lord said, “That is the man.” He laid hold of him, washed his heart, made him a new man in Christ Jesus—and John Bunyan, the master-dreamer, has given us that remarkable book! And when the Lord wanted a man who would stir up London from end to end by preaching in St. Mary Woolnoth, where should He find him? Why, among the ragamuffins who were conducting the slave trade on the coast of Africa among the sweepings and dregs of the universe! Almighty Grace picked up John Newton, changed his heart and made him one of His mightiest teachers!

And when the Lord will bring out any that shall really fear Him and do anything great for His sake, it will be either from among those who have been outwardly great sinners, or else those who have been made in their conscience to feel the greatness of their guilt and thus have been fitted to deal with others. Oh, how many times I have blessed God for the five years of despair that I had to endure! No poor soul was ever more racked than I was, nor more hunted of the devil. For five years I was a victim to that black thought that God would never forgive me and I bless His name for it. I never could have preached to the chief of sinners if it had not been for that experience! If I had come freely from my mother’s apron strings without any deep sense of sin, and had found Christ as many and many a young man does, readily and at once, I would never have liked to go down and run my hands in the mire to get at the foul and the vile. But now I look back upon those times of anguish—why, they were days when I thought I was worse than the devils in Hell! They were days when if anybody had asked me my character, though no one ever knew anything amiss of it, still I would have said, and felt it, too, that there did not breathe God’s air a greater miscreant that more deserved to be in Hell than I did! I wrote bitter things against myself and if any had said, “Why, your life is moral,” I would have said, “Yes, but my heart is a reeking dunghill, full of everything that is foul!” And I felt it, too, for though my lips never cursed God, yet my heart did with blasphemy so foul that I shudder when I think of it. When I was given up as prey to the devil, and it seemed as if there was a pandemonium within my heart, then indeed I knew what it was to be sorely broken in the place of darkness and to be like a ship driven out to sea with the mast gone over the side and every timber strained and the hold filling with water—and nothing but Omnipotence keeping it from going down into the lowest depths! Ah, then I knew that I needed a great Christ for great sinners! And I dare not ever preach a little Christ! And I dare not preach Him to little sinners either!

Oh, how great your sin has been, my Hearers! But Jesus Christ is still greater! You have gone deeply into sin, but the arm of Mercy can reach you! You have wandered far, but the eyes of Love can see you and the voice of Love calls to you now, “Come, come, come and welcome, come and welcome!” Come just as you are and you will not be cast away, but be accepted in the Beloved! “There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared,” and none fear, and love, and bless, and praise God as much as those who know that there is forgiveness with Him!

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: PSALM 145.

When you get to the 145th Psalm, you enter the Beulah Land of the Psalms. Henceforth the time of the singing of birds is come and you go from one Hallelujah to another! In the Hebrew, this is one of the alphabetical Psalms, but one letter (nun) is omitted, perhaps, as Dr. Bonar suggests, “we must be kept from putting stress on the mere form of the composition.” Those ancient singers sang their way through the alphabet from A to Z, and it is also well for us to begin to praise the Lord while we are yet children, and to keep on praising Him till we get to the “Z” in the very hour of death, gasping His praises till we get into eternity—

*“My God, I’ll praise You while I live,  
And praise You when I die!  
And praise You when I rise again,  
And to eternity!”*

Verses 1-3. I will extol You, my God, O King, and I will bless Your name forever and ever. Every day will I bless You, and I will praise Your name forever and ever. Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable. Such as the Lord is, such should His worship be. If He were a little God, He would deserve little praise, but the great God is “greatly to be praised.” There is no fear of going to any excess in our praises—we will never laud Him too highly, however lofty our expressions may be.

“Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable.” David knew what it was to be searched by God and he prayed, “Search me, O God.” But he could not search the greatness of his God. There, he was utterly lost—the utmost range of his faculties could not compass the greatness of Jehovah—“His greatness is unsearchable.”

4. One generation shall praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts. There is a hallowed tradition of praise. Each generation should hand out the praise of God as a precious legacy to the next one. Train up your sons and daughters to praise your God so that when your voice is silent in death, another voice like your own may continue the strain.

5. I will speak of the glorious honor of Your majesty, and of Your wondrous works. “I will speak.” What a powerful speaker David was! Note how he piles up his golden words. He is not content merely to talk of God’s majesty, but he speaks of its “glorious honor.” When he talked of God’s works, he calls them “wondrous works.”

6. And men shall speak of the might of Your terrible acts. If they will not speak of anything else, they shall be obliged to speak with awe when the terrors of the Lord are abroad in the earth. If they were as dumb as fishes before, they shall begin to say to one another, with bated breath, when earthquakes, famines, war and pestilence are rife, “What a terrible God He is!”

6. And I will declare Your greatness. While other men were talking, David did not say, “Now I can be quiet.” When they did not speak, he did, and when they began to speak, he still added his quota of praise to Jehovah.

7. They shall abundantly utter the memory of Your great goodness, and shall sing of Your righteousness. What a beautiful expression! “They shall abundantly utter.” The original has in it the idea of bubbling up, boiling over, bursting out like a fountain! Men’s hearts shall get to be so full of gratitude to God that they shall overflow with the memory of His great goodness! Then they shall sing. Singing is the language of jubilant nature—“the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing.” Singing is the language of men when they wish to express their highest joys. The saints sing the high praises of their God. Singing is the language of the holy angels! Did they not, when they came to Bethlehem, sing concerning the newborn King? Singing is the language of Heaven and most marvelous of all, singing is the highest language that God ever uses! “He will rejoice over you with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing.” Oh, for more holy singing!

8. The LORD is gracious. That alone is enough to make us sinners sing, for we need Divine Grace and, “the Lord is gracious.”  
8. And full of compassion. There is no “passion” in Him, but there is “compassion” in Him. What a mercy that is for us! “He is full of compassion.”  
8. Slow to anger, and of great mercy. Do you hear that, you great sinners and you saints who need great forbearance?  
9. The Lord is good to all. Even to His enemies! Does not the dewdrop hang upon the thistle as well as upon the rose?  
9. And His tender mercies are over all His works. He cares for the worm in the sod and for the fish in the sea as well as for men upon the face of the earth.  
10. All Your works shall praise You, O Lord; and Your saints shall bless You. Their voices can reach a higher note and a loftier strain than God’s works can ever reach. “Your saints shall bless You.”  
11. They shall speak of the glory of Your Kingdom. For the saints love God as their King, and they rejoice to remember what the King’s Son said to His disciples, “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.” So well may they sing of it!  
11-13. And talk of Your power; to make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of His Kingdom. Your Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, and Your dominion endures throughout all generations. What is the use of preaching if it does not glorify God? What is the use of a tongue that does not speak or sing of the glory of God’s Kingdom? Let one of God’s bards have this as the theme of his song and he feels like a hind let loose, rejoicing in glorious liberty!  
14. The Lord upholds all that fall, and raises up as those that are bowed. Does not this seem to be an amazing change in the strain? The Lord is a King and His Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom—yet what is He doing? Why, He is upholding, propping up those that are ready to fall and lifting up those that are crushed and oppressed! Earthly kings often glory in the terror of their power and the splendor of their majesty. What a condescending God is ours, whose Glory is a moral glory and whose chief delight consists in blessing the poor and needy! Let us bless His name for this. Are any of you ready to fall? Then praise Him for this glorious truth, “The Lord upholds all that fall”! Are any of you bowed down? Daughter of Abraham, have you been bowed down these many years? Oh, that you might be made straight this very hour! And you may be, for God can lift you up, for He “raises up all those that are bowed down.”  
15, 16. The eyes of all wait upon You; and You give them their meat in due season. You open Your hands and satisfy the desire of every living thing. What a glorious God we have! How easily can He supply the needs of His people! He has but to open His hands and it is done! We need not be afraid to come to Him, as though our needs would be too great for Him to supply. The commissariat of the universe is superintended by this truly Universal Provider, who has but to open His hands to satisfy “the desire of every living thing.”  
17. The LORD is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works. This is a thing for which many modern divines do not praise God. The attribute of righteousness in the Character of God is expelled from a good deal of modern theology. But he who loves God rightly, loves the righteousness of God! I would not care to have salvation if it were unrighteous salvation. The righteousness of God gleams like a sharp twoedged sword and it is terrible to those who are at enmity against Him. But the true children of the Most High delight to see this sword of State carried in the front of the great King of kings! The seraphim cry, one to another, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts!” The redeemed in Glory sing, “Just and true are Your ways, You King of saints!” But the critical critics of the present day care nothing for these attributes of Jehovah.  
18. The LORD is near unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth. If you read this Psalm through carefully, you will notice the great number of, “alls,” with which the latter part of the Psalm is studded. And this is appropriate, for God is All-in-All, He is the One, the All, so let Him have all praise from all!  
19. He will fulfill the desire of them that fear Him: He also will hear their cry, and will save them. When you have respect to God’s will, God will have respect to your will. When you fear Him you will have no one else to fear, and when you make His service your delight, He will make your needs His care.  
20. The LORD preserves all them that love Him: but all the wicked will He destroy. As in a state of sanitary perfection, everything that breeds pollutants and disease is banished—so must it be in God’s great universe when He has completed His works—“all the wicked will He destroy.”  
21. My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD: and let all flesh bless His holy name forever and ever.

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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WAITING, HOPING, WATCHING  
NO. 2579

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JULY 17, 1898.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 22, 1883.

**“I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait, and in His Word do I hope, My soul waits for the Lord more than they who watch for the morning—yes, more than they who watch for the morning.”  
Psalm 130:5, 6.**

As we read this Psalm, we noticed, from the opening verses of it, that David was in the depths. He is not the only one of God’s people who has been there. If we imagine that the experience of true saints is always a happy, high level of peace, we make a great mistake. They have their rising and their falling, their days and their nights, their summers and their winters. Where there is life, there are pretty sure to be changes. The statues in St. Paul’s Cathedral are, I suppose, always cold, but living men are sometimes ready to faint in the heat—and sometimes they are well-near frozen with the cold. If you are a living child of God, expect that you will have many variations in your experience and that sometimes you will be in the depths as others have been. Was not your Lord there? This Psalm is called, in the Latin version, De profundis, and I am sure that our Lord, though He is now in excelsis—in the very heights—yet had on earth times when He could sing this De profundis Psalm—“Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O Lord.” Then, how could we have fellowship with Him in His suffering if we were not, sometimes, in the depths, too? How could we know what He felt, how could we be made like unto our Lord if we were not also cast down?

The best of godly men will be, occasionally or even often, in the depths of temporal trouble. David was hunted by Saul, hated by the Philistines, grieved by his son Absalom—he had many trials—and the best of God’s people will have their trials, too. Though faith often lifts us up above them, yet there are times when the iron enters into our soul, when, “for a season, if necessary, we are in heaviness through manifold trials.”

God’s people, too, are sometimes in the depths of spiritual sorrow. They do not always live upon the mountain with their transfigured Master. Sometimes they come into the valley where they are made to feel the power of inbred sin and to mourn over it exceedingly. When the light of God’s Countenance is withdrawn, the dearest of His children has to cry, with his Lord on Calvary, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” There are depths of soul-agony which some Christians have never known, but into which others have been plunged again and again. It has been as much as the saint could do to call his God his own, for his very faith seemed to tremble under the pressure of affliction and depression of spirit. This Psalm ought to comfort you who are in the depths, as you see that others have had to go there, too. But mind that you follow the example of the Psalmist and, whatever you are called to suffer, never leave off praying! Whatever else you do, never neglect this one prime means of deliverance. Then you may say with David, “Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O Lord.”—

*“Long as they live should Christians pray,*

*For only while they pray they live,”*  
but especially when their soul seems, as it were, to have found a sepulcher—when, while yet alive, they appear to be sinking down into the depths. Then is the time when, with sevenfold earnestness, they must lift up their hearts and their voices and cry mightily unto the Lord.

One of the designs of Satan, when he finds saints in the depths, is to keep them there, but the wise child of God will cry to his Lord when he gets there, for then Satan cannot keep him there for long. He who cries “out of the depths” will soon be out of the depths! That cry is the voice of life and God will not leave that soul in the depths, or suffer His redeemed one to see corruption there. Up you will rise if you can but cry! There is something marvelous about the power of prayer—when Jonah prayed out of the belly of the fish—he was soon brought up from the depths of the sea to stand on the dry land and to go on his Master’s errand. Cry, then, if you are in the depths! If you never cried before, cry now. If you have been accustomed to pray, pull out all the stops of this wonderful organ of prayer and let the music ascend into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, even though it seems to you to be nothing but discord.

But notice, also, that while David thus cried unto the Lord, he made confession of his sin. He felt he could not stand before God on the footing of his personal character. He could not hope to prevail with Jehovah by his own merits, so he pleaded, “There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.” Come, child of God, if sin is a dark cloud that hides your Lord’s face from you, come to Him with this great Truth of God on your tongue and in your heart, “there is forgiveness.” When Luther was in great trouble of soul, he was comforted by one who said to him, “Do you not believe your Creed?” “Yes,” replied Luther, “I believe the Creed.” “Well, then,” rejoined the other, “one article in it is, ‘I believe in the forgiveness of sins.’” Luther’s heart was lightened at once by the remembrance of the words in this Psalm, “there is forgiveness.” It may be that you have sinned many times and grievously, but, “there is forgiveness.” Though a child of God, you have gone far astray from Him—but, “there is forgiveness.” You have backslidden sadly and horribly, but, “there is forgiveness.” The devil comes and howls at you and tells you that your doom is sealed and your damnation is sure—but, “there is forgiveness.” Oh, blessed sentence! “There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.”

When David really felt in his soul that whatever the depths might be in which he was plunged, yet there was forgiveness for him—that however feeble his cries might be, there was forgiveness—then he rested in perfect peace and he said, in the language of the text, “I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait, and in His Word do I hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than they who watch for the morning—yes, more than they who watch for the morning.”

There are three words on which I am going to speak. The first and the chief word is, waiting—“I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait.” The next word, which helps the first one, is, hoping—“and in His Word do I hope.” And then the third word grows out of the first, and that is, watching— “My soul waits for the Lord more than they who watch for the morning.” May the Holy Spirit bless us both in speaking and hearing while we meditate upon these three words—waiting, hoping, watching!

I. The first word is, waiting. “I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait.” Upon which I observe, first, that this is the constant posture of all the saints of God. Before our Lord Jesus Christ came, all the spiritual people among the 12 tribes were waiting for His appearing. They firmly believed that He would come, yet they died without the sight for which they were looking. Over the door of the great mausoleum of the Old Testament saints is inscribed this epitaph, “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off.” They were waiters— waiting until the Rod should come forth out of the stem of Jesse—and the Branch should grow out of his roots. Some few of these waiters were found in the Temple when the Lord appeared. You remember the names of Simeon and Anna, who were “waiting for the consolation of Israel”? They had grown gray in waiting, but still they were among “them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.” And, at last, Simeon could say, “Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your Word, for my eyes have seen Your Salvation.” This expression, waiting for the Lord, describes all the saints, from righteous Abel down to faithful old Simeon who took the Infant Jesus in his arms and blessed God for the appearing of the Messiah, the woman’s promised Seed.  
But what about the saints since then? They also are, or should be, waiting for the Lord—“Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.” Though too many forget it, He has said, “Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his work shall be.” This is the Church’s glorious hope in which, in some senses, both Jews and Gentiles are now united, for if the Jews are waiting for the coming of the Messiah, so are we, only they, in their unbelief, see not that He has once come. Let it not be said of us that we, in our unbelief, see not that He will come again, but, believing in His First Advent, let us, therefore, patiently wait and longingly look for the time when, “the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we always be with the Lord.” O glorious hope! We are still waiting for its blessed realization!  
Yes, and in this respect I may say with Dr. Watts, that—  
“**The saints on earth, and all the dead,  
But one communion make”**

in this fellowship of waiting! Fancy not, Beloved, that in Heaven they have no emotion but that of joy! We know that all their emotions are joyous, but among them is this one—that they, too, are waiting until the Lord shall again manifest Himself, for, in the day of His appearing, those disembodied spirits shall put on their resurrection bodies, changed and made like Christ’s glorious body! And in that day they shall be united with all the saints who remain upon the earth, for, without them, the glorified spirits above could not be made perfect. That is to say, the Church of God above cannot be perfected as to all its members till those who are still in the world of trial shall be brought Home to meet with them—and so the whole Church shall be “forever with the Lord.” Therefore, dear Friends, if any of you are troubled because you are waiting for the return of your Lord and He seems long in coming, I remind you that the whole Church of Christ is waiting—the whole 12 tribes of our spiritual Israel are “waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body,” at the return of our Lord! The manifestation of the Head will also be the manifestation of all the members of His mystical body. Therefore, be content to be waiters, for all God’s saints have been and still are such!

Observe, too, that the children of God, on earth, are frequently in the posture of waiting as individuals. Not only as forming part of Christ’s body do they wait together with the rest of His people, but each one has to wait individually. In the first dawning of Grace in the soul, when the heart is taught to believe in Jesus, it does not always happen that peace immediately follows upon faith. We meet with many about whose salvation we have no doubt, but they have, themselves, little or no hope as to their own eternal safety. We feel sure that they have really trusted in the Savior and, therefore, have been saved by Him, but, by reason of temptation, or bodily weakness, or a measure of darkness remaining upon them through ignorance, they do not yet know the glorious liberty and assurance of the children of God. I have no doubt that there are many in the fold of Jesus who do not feel themselves at rest—they are waiting until they shall possess full peace with God. They at times enjoy that peace— sweet gleams of sunlight come to them—but they are soon in darkness, again, and their unbelief struggles with their faith. They cannot get further than to cry with that poor man who said to Christ, “Lord, I believe; help You my unbelief.”

Well, beloved Brother or Sister, if you are in that condition, you are waiting that your faith may grow—waiting till the blessed Spirit shall be a Spirit of Consolation to you and shall take of the things of Christ and show them to you. You are sitting, as it were, in the porch of the King’s house. There is safety in waiting at his doors, but you would be much happier and more at rest if you entered the King’s palace and sat at His table! You do trust Him—may you never have any other trust! You are relying upon His righteousness, yet you do not feel that joy and peace which others of the children of God feel. Well, then, you are in this place of waiting and, for a while, perhaps, you will have to exercise that waiting spirit.

Many of us have gone further than that, but we are still waiting— waiting, among other things, for victory over sin. You know that you are forgiven, dear Brothers and Sisters—you are quite sure that you are a child of God and, by God’s Grace, you have driven out many sins—but still, when you are fiercely tempted, strongly provoked, or placed in certain trying circumstances, you discover your weakness very sadly. And then your cry is, “Lord, give me victory over sin!” And you will never be content till you have it. Well, go on crying for it out of the very depths! Go on hoping for it through the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ! But if it does not come to you and you have, day after day, and even year after year, to bitterly feel that the work of God is not perfected in you, still wait, for the Lord will not leave His work unfinished! He will have regard to the work of His own hands. He will go on with it till it is perfected! But, in the meantime, you will be waiting for the complete victory.

And if you should get that, you will still have to be a waiter, oftentimes, in the matter of prayer. God answers His people’s prayers when they ought to be answered. The prayers that are such as you and I, in our most spiritual moments, would wish to have answered, shall be answered. But perhaps not at once. It would be difficult to say how long a Christian may have to wait for answers to prayer. If I remember rightly, there is one godly man who has been praying every day for 36 years for one thing and recording his prayers in a book. And other Believers have joined with him, yet the answer has not come. But he as fully expects it as when he first began to pray! I need not mention the Brother’s name, but I feel sure that he will be heard and answered, although at present he has not received the blessing he is seeking from the Lord. I have heard of wives praying for the conversion of their husbands through their whole lifetime and never living to see them saved—yet they were brought to the Lord after their partners had gone Home. I have heard of parents pleading for their children by the score of years, together, yet the prayer has not been answered at present. God is keeping them waiting and it is theirs to still wait at the posts of His doors hoping and expecting the blessing they have asked of the Lord.

I will suppose that you have had your prayers answered and, therefore, you have not to wait for that mercy. Yet I am sure you know of something else to wait for. Sometimes we have to wait for conscious fellowship with God. We had it once, but we have lost it, so we cry to have it restored. When we enjoy it, again, we cry for more of it—and when we have more of it, we still cry for more! And when we have the most that we have ever had, then our cry is yet keener for still more—for this sweet love of God enlarges the heart into which it enters! It brings with it a hallowed hungering and thirsting—it kills all unholy craving, but it creates a sacred appetite which is greatly to be desired. O Lord, make my hunger for You to be insatiable! Let it never be satisfied. Enlarge my heart till it is as large as Heaven and then, since, “the Heaven of heavens cannot contain You,” make my soul as large as seven heavens and then, since seven heavens could not contain You, go on to enlarge my spirit till I am filled with all the fullness of God! If this is the desire of your heart, you will always be waiting, asking and longing for more and more of fellowship with your Lord.

“But,” you say, “I thought that Christians sometimes reached a point beyond which they could go no further.” Then you thought amiss, for that is not the teaching of Scripture. When the Apostle Paul, the most marvelous runner who ever ran the Christian race, had been running for many, many years, he said that he had not yet attained—he even forgot the things that were behind and still pressed forward toward that which was before, the prize of his high calling of God in Christ Jesus! Brothers and Sisters, there is an infinity of Grace and mercy beyond you! Whatever of blessings you have as yet received, you have but sipped from the ever-flowing stream of Eternal Love. You have but gathered a few shells washed up on the shore of the ocean of Boundless Grace. You have not yet received all! You cannot yet enjoy all—you must wait, and wait, and wait, for—

*“Still there’s more to follow.”*

Yes, and if we were to get as much of personal blessings as ever we could hold, we should still be waiting! You ask, “What for?” Well, I, for one, am waiting for the Lord to bless my work of faith and labor of love in the preaching of the Gospel. And are not you waiting for the same thing? After every address you give, after every time you have the members of your class gathered together and talked to them about Christ, are you not waiting for more souls to be saved through your service? Do you not wait to be able to better serve God? Are not some of you waiting to have your tongues unloosed—waiting to have your hearts enlarged—waiting for better opportunities of doing God’s work, or for more Divine Grace to use the opportunities you have—and waiting for the Divine Seal upon the efforts which you have put forth? I know that it is so and if we could all get that, we would still be waiting—waiting to see all our families saved— waiting to see all our neighbors saved—waiting to see this great London saved—waiting to see all nations bowing at Immanuel’s feet! We can never be satisfied until we have that. And if we had it, we would then be waiting, as some of my dear Brothers and Sisters in the Church are just now waiting—waiting to be taken up to their Home above—waiting till men shall say, “The pitcher is broken at the fountain and the wheel is broken at the cistern,” because the Lord had said, “Rise up, My love, My fair one and come away.” David said, “I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Your likeness.” And we, too, shall be satisfied when we see Christ— satisfied when, in our flesh, we shall see the God that died for us— satisfied when He shall reign upon the earth and we shall reign with Him—satisfied when we shall hear the eternal, “Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!” Yet I imagine that, even then, we shall be waiting, waiting, waiting, throughout eternity, for some fresh revelation of the unutterable, unreliable love of God in Christ Jesus.

You see, dear Friends, how I have tried to set before you this waiting posture of the saints as a whole, and also of each one in particular. Now I want to show you that it is a very blessed posture, for waiting tries faith—and that is a good thing—because faith grows by trial! Waiting exercises patience and that is also a good thing, for patience is one of the choice gifts of God. Waiting endears every blessing when it comes—and thus we get two joys—the joy of waiting for the joy, as well as the joy of enjoying the joy when it comes! We get a better appetite for the banquet by waiting awhile before we sit down to it. Oh, the joy it will be to rest after toil! Oh, the delight of heavenly wealth after earthly poverty! Oh, the bliss of being perfectly rid of every tendency to sin after having struggled with it here for years! Thus, all these trials are preparations for a higher state of joy, by-and-by.

While we are waiting, this posture becomes intense till, with the Psalmist, we can say twice over, “I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait. My soul waits for the Lord.” That is really three times over. We throw our very soul into it—“My soul does wait. My soul waits for the Lord.” It is as if our whole being was craving after more of God! Notice how it is all summed up in the object for which we wait—“My soul waits for the Lord. I need HIM! My soul waits for the Lord; I need nothing else; I am not waiting for anything else.” There is nothing else to wait for! As David said on another occasion, “Now, Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in You.” But oh, we are waiting intensely, insatiably, for God, the living God! When shall we come and appear before God? This, then, is the great longing and waiting of each one of the people of God. “I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait. My soul waits for the Lord.”

II. I have scarcely a minute in which to speak about the second word, HOPING—“and in His Word do I hope.”  
Observe, first, that hope is the reason for waiting. “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 that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.” Then, next, hope is the strength of waiting. You do not wait for a thing about which you are absolutely hopeless. If you have no hope of obtaining it, you say, “Then I will go my way. It is useless to wait any longer.” But inasmuch as you have some degree of hope in waiting for God, your spirit is sustained so that you can still continue to wait for Him.  
Further, this hope is the sweetener of waiting. Waiting is always sweet when there is a hope at the end of it. The trip may be very long, but you pursue your way with willing footsteps because you hope to reach the shelter at the end. But make sure that your hope is a good hope, that it is a well-founded hope, that it is a happy hope, that it is a hope that “makes not ashamed,” that it is a hope that fixes itself on Christ, alone, for if you have not that hope, you will not wait. And if you do not wait, you will not receive. It is the waiting soul that gets the blessing! “It is good for me to draw near to God,” said David. And he also said, “Wait on the Lord: be of good courage and He shall strengthen your heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.” You cannot do this unless you have hope—therefore pray the Lord to give you a good hope, to brighten your hope and keep your eyes always looking for that which is yet to come, and which is laid up in the promise of God for all His people.  
III. Then the third word is WATCHING. He that waits and he that hopes learns to watch. First, notice the figure used here, and then observe that the figure is exceeded—“My soul waits for the Lord more than they who watch for the morning—yes, more than they who watch for the morning.”  
First, what is the figure used here? I should not wonder if it is partly the Temple. There was the great Temple at Jerusalem and all the people went up to it to worship so many times a year. I will suppose that God has given warm hearts to you and me—and that we desire to be at the ancient Temple. We have made our last march in the middle of the night. We have reached the bottom of the hill and climbed up its steep sides and we have reached the very gate of the Temple. When we get there, it is still night, so we ask one of the guards, “We have come to appear before God. When will the service begin?” He replies, “Not till the day breaks.” “And what will happen when the day breaks?” “Why, then, they will offer the morning lamb and they will burn the incense. The priest will trim the lamps and the day’s service will begin.” We are lifting up our hearts to God—we have come up to the Temple on purpose to worship the Lord— we want to have a good long day of service, so we turn our eyes towards the hills over yonder and we watch. We say, “Watchman, what of the night? Is the morning coming? When will the blessed day begin? We are longing to enjoy all the ordinances of the Lord’s House.” So the watchers stand there and look out for the first tokens of daybreak on the Eastern hills.  
Or, it may be that the figure is that of the guards upon the city walls. The sentinels have had to watch all night long. With steady and weary tramp, the watchman has gone from one tower to another, speaking to his brother sentinel as he has met him, keeping to his beat all through the dreary, cold, rainy, windy night. And he says to himself, “I wish it were morning.” As he exchanges the watchword with his companion, he says, “I wish it were morning. My eyelids are heavy, my head begins to ache with this constant watching for the enemy. I wish it were morning.” Have you never been in that posture, dear Friend? Have I? I hope I know what it is to watch for the morning—that I may meet with God in His holy Temple above and also to watch for the morning that this weary sentinel work may be done—and that I may be where there are no more enemies who can assault the sacred walls of Zion!  
Then, again, some of you know what it is to watch for the morning in another sense. There is a dear one sick. How he tosses to and fro! He has a high fever and you constantly give him a cooling drink—and you take care at the proper hour to administer the medicine. But there is many a groan and many a weary cry. And you are all alone with the patient— everybody else in the house is sound asleep. Have you not sometimes gone to the venetian blind and turned it up just a little to see whether the sun has not risen? That clock’s unwearied tick, tick, tick, tick, tick, tick, tick, tick—thousands of times—seems to go right into your brain and into your heart. And the poor sufferer says, “Would God it were morning!” You remember how, in the day, he said, “Would God it were evening!” That is the way with the sick and, at last, you get as weary as your patient is. The fact is, you are half afraid you did fall asleep—you do not know what mischief may come if you do not watch—and you begin to say with the sufferer, “Would God it were morning!” Have you ever watched thus in a spiritual sense over a poor sin-sick soul? Have you ever watched thus over your own sick soul, until you have said, “I watch for the morning”? If so, this watching has been to you a picture and emblem of what your state of heart is in reference to your God. You are waiting and you are watching, and you cry, “When will the day break, and the shadows flee away?”  
But, the figure is exceeded by the fact, for the text says, “My soul waits for the Lord more than they who watch for the morning.” We have been watching longer than they who guard the Temple or the city towers! The sentinel has only a few hours’ night-watch, but some of us have been watching for these 30 years! Some of you for these 50 years! Ah, some of you for 60 years! I do not wonder that you have a stronger desire for the morning than they have who have only watched for one night.  
Besides, you expect so much more than they do, for when the day comes, what does it bring to them? A little ease for the sentinel, a little rest for the nurse—but they will have to go back to the nursing or the watching as soon as the shades of night return. You and I are waiting for a daylight that will bring us endless rest and perfect joy! Well may we watch more than they who watch for the morning, for theirs is but the morning of a day, but ours is the morning of an eternity which shall know no end! They do but watch for the sun with its passing beams—we watch for the Sun of righteousness whose Glory makes Heaven itself! Well may we grow eager when we think of what is yet to be revealed in us. Well may our hunger increase as we think of the sweets that are reserved for us. You have heard of the Goths and Vandals? It is said that, somehow, they tasted of the grapes of Italy. I suppose that some bunches of fruit were carried across the Alps and when those poor Goths and Vandals tasted them, what did they say? “Let us go to the land where these clusters grow and eat them fresh from the vines.” And it was not long before, in innumerable hordes, they swarmed over Italy! In a far higher sense, something like that has happened to us and, therefore, we sing—  
*“My soul has tasted of the grapes,  
And now it longs to go  
Where my dear Lord, His vineyard keeps, And all the clusters grow.”*  
We wait for Him “more than they who watch for the morning; I say, more than they who watch for the morning.” Never did bride expect her marriage day as the true saint expects his Lord! Never did woman in travail long to behold her child as they who watch for their Lord and long for His appearing! Never did prisoner, pining in the dungeon till the rust ate into his soul, pine for liberty as saints pine for their Lord! This is the right posture for the whole Church—and for each individual Christian— waiting, hoping, watching till He appears who is their Husband, Savior, Friend and All-in-All! God bless you, dear Friends, and keep you thus watching, for His name’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 130.**

I will first read the Psalm through and, afterwards, say a few words by way of exposition.  
Verses 1-8. Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O LORD. Lord, hear my voice: let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If You Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared. I wait for the LORD, my soul does wait, and in His Word do I hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than they who watch for the morning—yes, more than they who watch for the morning. Let Israel hope in the LORD, for with the LORD there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities. You notice that this is one of the Songs of Degrees, that is, Psalms ascending by steps, and it begins at the very bottom—“Out of the depths.” But it gradually climbs up to the heights—“He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.” May your experience and mine, Beloved, be like a ladder—upward, always upward, step by step, always rising and getting nearer to our God!  
The Psalm begins very low—“Out of the depths.” The Psalmist is in the depths of sorrow and conscious sin, the depths of weakness, the depths of doubt and fear. Yet, though he is in those depths, he does not leave off praying—“Out of the depths have I cried.” Some of the best prayers that were ever prayed have been offered in the depths. There are some men who never prayed at all until they came into the depths of sorrow—and those sorrows pressed their prayers out of them.  
The Psalmist’s prayer was a cry. That is a child’s prayer—it cries to its mother or its father—“Out of the depths have I cried.” But it was not like a child’s cries sometimes are—cries to itself, or cries to nobody—“Out of the depths have I cried unto YOU, O Jehovah.” That is the right kind of prayer which is directed to God as an arrow is aimed at the target.

In looking back over his past experience, the Psalmist tells the Lord that he has prayed. Sometimes, it is a good thing to pray over your prayers. “I have prayed, Lord; now I present one more petition, ‘I pray You to remember that I have prayed. I pray You to hear me. Lord, hear my voice.’” What is the good of prayer if God does not hear it? Sometimes we ask God to answer our supplication. That is right, but, at the same time, remember that it may be a greater blessing for God to hear our prayers than to answer them, for if He were to make it an absolute rule that He would grant all our requests, it might be a curse rather than a blessing! At any rate, I should feel it a very dreadful responsibility to have cast upon me, for then, after all, I should have to depend upon my own prayers and, therefore, have to order my own way. But when I read that God will hear my prayer, that is much better, for He can do as He likes about answering it. And if I pray an improper prayer, what is better for me than for God to hear it and then to set it aside? And, often, mine are such poor feeble prayers that it is much better for me that He should hear them and then do for me exceeding abundantly above what I have asked or thought! I used to think that we ought to say that He is a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God, but I do not say that now. It is enough that He hears, enough that you have presented your petition and that God has heard it!  
“Lord, hear my voice: let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.” That is, “Lord, consider my prayer; have respect unto it. Answer it according to Your wise consideration of it. ‘Let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication.’” Our prayers must usually be supplications—that is the word for a beggar’s pleading when he supplicates and asks for favors. That is what we do when we plead with God! And even if we do not speak, yet there is a voice in our supplications. In the sixth Psalm, David speaks of the voice of his weeping. And there is often a voice in that sorrow which cannot find a voice. God hears the grief that cannot itself speak to Him—“Let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.”  
And now, having put up his petition, notice his confession—“If You, Jehovah, should mark iniquities, O Adonai, who shall stand?” So it should run. If God were to sit like a Judge taking notes of the evidence and putting down, against His people, all their errors, who would be able to stand in that court? We would all be condemned! Then, does not God mark iniquities? Yes, He does in one sense, but not in another. And, through His infinite love and mercy, He does not deal with us after our sins, nor reward us according to our iniquities. “If He did,” David seems to say, “I could not stand.” But he says more, “Who shall stand?” Whatever pretensions to perfection any persons may make, they are false! There is no man who can stand in God’s sight when He comes to mark our iniquities. And if we are taught of God’s Spirit, we shall know it to be so! In fact, the more holy a man becomes, the more conscious he is of unholiness.  
“But”—and what a blessed, “but,” this is! One of the most blessed, “buts,” in the Word of God! “But there is forgiveness with You.” Or, “There is a propitiation with You.” There is a readiness to deal with men, not according to their just deserts, but according to Free Grace and the infinite mercy of God. “There is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared.” Is not that a very strange expression? One would have thought that it would have said, “There is judgment with You, that You may be feared.” But no, Brothers and Sisters, if there were judgment with God and no forgiveness, then men would grow despairing and they would be hardened and rebellious! Or else all would be swept away in God’s wrath and there would be nobody left to fear Him. It is mercy that softens the heart, it is the forgiveness of God that leads men to love Him and to fear Him. The true fear of God—the holy filial fear—never rises out of judgment, but springs out of forgiving love. I hope, Beloved, you feel that because you are forgiven, you fear to offend God. Because of so much love, you fear to grieve the blessed Spirit of God.  
“I wait for Jehovah, my soul does wait, and in His Word do I hope. My soul waits for Adonai”—the King, the Sovereign Lord—“more than they who watch for the morning, they who watch for the morning.” Our translators put in the words, “I say more than”—I suppose, to make the sense more clear. But, by doing so, they spoiled the beautiful poetic simplicity of the original.  
“Let Israel hope in the Lord.” Until this verse, the Psalmist has been talking about himself. Now he speaks about all the people of God. True religion is expansive! As your own heart gets warmed, you begin to call others in to share your happiness. “Let Israel hope in the Lord.” Did not their father Jacob do so? When all night he wrestled at the brook Jabbok, he hoped in the Lord, and so he gained his name, Israel, and went away triumphant because he hoped in Jehovah!  
“For with Jehovah there is mercy.” Believe that, O seeking sinner! “With Jehovah there is mercy.” Believe this, O backslider! “With Jehovah there is mercy.” Believe this, downcast child of God! “And with Him is plenteous redemption.” There is enough for you and there is enough for all who come to Him! There is not a slave of sin whom God cannot redeem, for “with Him is plenteous redemption.”  
“And He shall redeem.” There is the comfort of it—He not only has the redemption, but He will make use of it. “He shall redeem Israel”—the whole of His Israel, all His people—“He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.” Oh, come to Him, then, with all your iniquities, and pray to be redeemed from them! And as surely as Jehovah lives, He will fulfill this promise and redeem you from all your iniquities!

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ISRAEL’S HOPE—OR, THE CENTER OF THE TARGET  
NO. 2199

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, APRIL 19, 1891, DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption.”  
Psalm 130:7.**

When he penned this Psalm, the writer, David, was in deep distress, if not of circumstances, yet of conscience. He constantly mentions iniquities and begs forgiveness. He felt like a shipwrecked mariner, carried overboard into the raging sea. Thus he reviews the situation—“Out of the depths have I cried unto You, O Lord.” Yet he lived to tell the tale of deliverance! His prayer from among the waves was a memory worth preserving and he preserves it. The mercy of God to him he weaves into a song for us—and in this our text is found.

Two things the rescued sufferer tells us. First, that, as God delivered him from the power of sin, so He will deliver all His praying, wrestling, believing people. That is the last verse of the Psalm—“He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.” The argument is—He delivered me. What am I more than others? The gracious Lord who saved me will save all those who call upon Him in truth. He delivered me, though laden with iniquities, and His pardoning mercy is unfailing and, therefore, He can and will rescue others from their uttermost distresses. This is a good line of reasoning, for the Lord’s ways are constant and He will do for all Believers what He has done for one of them.

The other thing which the Psalmist sets before us is this— we are wise if we apply to God, alone, for help. He says, “I wait for the Lord, my soul does wait. My soul waits for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning.” He incidentally tells us that it is vain to wait upon man and put our trust in any human support, for the way of deliverance only lies in reliance upon God, immediately and alone. We are not to depend upon outward means, but upon the God who lends efficacy to all means. Why is it that we need to be told of this? Why is faith in God so rare? To go first to the Lord is to save time! Straightforward always makes the best runner and to go straight to God is not only our duty, but it will be our happiest course. The Psalm encourages us to this by the assurance that the Lord can and will help all that seek Him—and it urges us to let that seeking be distinctly and directly turned to the Most High, to Him alone and to none other. To join another ground of confidence with the Lord is a sort of practical idolatry which is to the wounding of faith.

May we learn well the lesson of this Psalm! When we meet with a man who has been in special trouble and he has escaped from it, we are anxious to know how it came to pass in order that if we are cast into similar trial, we also may resort to the same door of hope. You meet with a man that has long been sorely afflicted—to find him full of joy at his relief is a pleasure and a personal comfort! You heard him lamenting for years and now you hear him rejoicing—and this excites your wonder and your hope! It is as though a cripple saw another lame man leaping and running. He very naturally enquires, “How is this?” The other day you saw a blind man begging in the street—and now he has eyes bright as that which sparkle on the face of a gazelle—and you cry in astonishment—“Tell me who was the oculist that operated on your eyes, for I may be in the same case and I would be glad to know where to go.” Here, then, we have a gate of knowledge opened before us. The Psalmist found salvation and deliverance in going directly to God and trusting in Him! Let us follow his example and in all times of distress, caused by our own iniquity, or by anything else, let us repair to the Throne of Grace, for the Most High will also deal with us even as He dealt with His servant of old, to whose cries, out of the depths, He lent an attentive ear. This Psalm is called “

De Profundis”— its teaching is not only profound but practical.

Let me freely speak with you as concerning the great salvation which, as fallen creatures, we all need. In that matter our only resort must be to God, alone, for, “salvation is of the Lord.” God has been pleased, in these last days, to reveal Himself in a glorious manner, suitable to our salvation. He was always to be seen in creation by those whose sight was not darkened by moral evil and, doubtless, angelic eyes always beheld Jehovah in all the works of His hands. He was to be seen under the old Law in types and shadows and, believing men and women were enabled, by the illumination of the Holy Spirit, to behold the Lord in His Temple. But in these last days, the Lord has spoken to us by His Son, whom He has made heir of all things, and in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. There is the Father most clearly to be seen—and now, if we read that Israel is to hope in the Lord and if we see that the way of salvation lies in relying upon “the Lord”—we must read between the lines and understand that the glorious Lord must always be the object of faith according as He, at this time, reveals Himself.

It is written, “They that know Your name will put their trust in You.” That is to say, they trust, as they know how He reveals Himself. At this moment the manifestation of God stands thus—His dear Son has descended from the highest heavens and taken upon Himself our human nature, so that He is God and Man in one sacred and mysterious Person! In that complex form, the Word made flesh dwelt among men on earth some 30 years and more. And then He took upon Himself the weight of human sin and bore it upon His shoulders up to the Cross. He was arrested by the hand of Divine Justice and treated by Justice as if He had been a sinner, though sinner He could never be. He was numbered with the transgressors and given over to wicked men, who, in their willful malice, scourged Him, spit upon Him, crowned Him with thorns and condemned Him to a felon’s death. He died, not for any iniquity of His own, but for the transgression of His people was He smitten. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him. Yes, “He was made a curse for us” and even more—“He was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” “He died, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.”

If, then, we would trust God for our personal salvation, we must confide in Him as He manifests Himself for that purpose. And as we perceive that God sets forth Christ to be the Propitiation for our sin, we must accept that ordained way of putting away our sin. This is the way in which, “with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption.” And thus it is that, “He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.” We trust in the Lord God as He reveals Himself in the Person of His Son Christ Jesus who has displayed in His own self the Love and the Justice of God—and has shown how these were equally glorified by the way of redemption through the substitution and sacrifice of One who is the Fellow of the Highest, and yet next-of-kin to man! Our Lord has buried our sin in His sepulcher and has gone up into Heaven to plead, there, with God, for transgressors and, at the same time, to prepare a place for as many as believe in Him and so are saved by His plenteous redemption! Understand, then, that if we read in the text, “Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption,” we now, today, in the light of the Gospel, read it thus—“Let the seeking sinner, who would be redeemed from all his iniquities, trust in God as He is seen in and through Jesus Christ, for there forgiveness is freely given through plenteous redemption, and sin is no longer marked or imputed to the Believer, because the sacrifice of Jesus has blotted it out and removed it forever.”

This is the introduction of our discourse. May the Holy Spirit now grant His anointing both to preacher and hearers!  
I. The chief point to which I desire you to give earnest heed is this—in obtaining Gospel blessings, THE FIRST EXERCISES OF FAITH MUST BE TOWARDS GOD IN CHRIST JESUS and not towards the blessings, themselves. “Let Israel hope in the Lord.” We do not read, “Let Israel hope for mercy.” But we read, “Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy.” Neither does it say, Let Israel hope for plenteous redemption.” But it is worded thus, “Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is plenteous redemption.” To me this has the look of a very encouraging Truth of God—the sinner is not to hasten with his first thoughts to the mercy that he needs, nor even to the promise of God to which he may look—but he is to go to the Lord Jesus Christ, Himself, as the Lord of Mercy and Fountain of Redemption! The first exercise of our faith is to deal immediately with the Lord God as He meets us in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ.  
Here let me say that this is the most natural order which faith can follow. Look first to the Giver and then to the gift! Look for the Helper and then for the help! Do not be saying, “I long to be forgiven. I labor to believe that I am forgiven. I desire to be saved. I want to know that I am saved.” This is looking for the fruit, when you have need, first, to find the tree! Your first business, as a seeker of pardon and salvation, is to believe in Jesus Christ, that is, to trust yourself with the Divine Savior. The natural order is believe in the Promiser and then you will believe the promise! You never say to yourself, “I should like to be able to take that man’s word. I will sit down and try to make my mind confident of the truth of what he says.” This would be a foolish and futile method of procedure. You follow a much more reasonable course—you enquire about the individual’s character and standing—you find out who he is, what he is and what he has done. And thus you gather arguments for confidence and faith. You cannot help believing the promise when once you believe in the promiser. If you find a merchant to be an eminently upright and substantial man, you do not hesitate to take his checks. In fact, you would be glad to have your wallet full of them! Faith prizes the promises of her faithful God, and calls them precious.  
Apply this rule and deal with heavenly things in due order. You seek pardon. Do not look continually at this priceless mercy at first, but look to the pardoning God! You will soon believe in forgiveness if you cause the first exercise of your faith to refer to the Forgiver, even Christ Jesus, Himself. When you have believed in Him, as able to say, “Your sins are forgiven you,” then you will believe in sins being forgiven! This is the natural order of things. So, also, if you desire to believe for salvation and to be assured that you have it, or may have it at once, the simple course—the natural course—is to believe in the Savior! To be healed, you believe first in the Healer. When you have believed in the Savior, then you will believe in the salvation. If you know that Jesus can save you; if you desire to be saved, you will trust Him to save you. You will be readily able to believe that you can be saved when you trust in Jesus as able to save to the uttermost.  
Poor trembling Heart, do not look at the blessing and say, “Alas, it is too great!” Look at the Savior Himself! Is anything too great for Him to give who gave His heart’s blood to redeem? Do not say, “My heart is so hard it cannot be changed.” Look at the Savior—is anything impossible to Him to whom the Father has committed all power? Is He not mighty to save? Fix your eyes, first and foremost, upon Him who is both God and Man and has, therefore, power and sympathy, majesty and mercy, Omnipotence and brotherliness. I pray you, do not consider so much the greatness of the effect as the unlimited power of the Cause. I may doubt my washing, but not when I believe in the cleansing virtue of the precious blood! It may be difficult to believe in my salvation, but not to believe in my Savior! It may be hard to hope for Heaven, but the text sets me an easier task—“Let Israel hope in the Lord.” When I open my window God-wards and look towards the Lord Jesus, I see glorious things in the light of the rising sun, even things which I could not have seen if I had not first turned towards the light. “In the beginning God”—this, according to the first chapter of Genesis, is the natural order of all Divine work—do not attempt to alter it. To this I would add, this is the necessary order. It must be so—the Savior first and then the salvation. Suppose, for a moment, that it were possible for you to obtain pardon without Christ—what good would it do you? I would remind you that no blessing is a Covenant blessing, or a blessing at all, except as it is connected with Christ Jesus and so with the Lord God. No comfort is worth having if Jesus does not comfort us! No forgiveness is worth the words which utter it if Jesus does not forgive. There is no coming to the Father except by Christ. If, therefore, I imagine that I have come to the Father without Christ, it is clear that I have not come! If I fancy that I have saving blessings apart from the appointed Savior, I am a deceived man! Beloved, do not seek after mercy, pardon, holiness, Heaven—except through Christ Jesus our Lord—for you will be seeking counterfeits, shadows, delusions. Begin at the Cross! See how Jesus puts it—“Come unto Me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” He does not first say, “Take My yoke upon you,” but first, “Come unto Me.” He first gives us rest and then, afterwards, we find it. But we begin with coming to Him.  
First Christ and then His yoke. First Christ and then rest. Do not ask for rest, first, and then say, “I will come to Christ afterwards.” This is an impossible order! Do not even say, “I must get a broken heart and then come to Christ.” No, come to Christ FOR a broken heart! I preach a Savior to you, tonight, who wants nothing of you, but who is ready to begin with you at the beginning, just where you are, in all your unworthiness and ill desert—in all your depravity and vileness! He is ready to take you up from the mire of the pit wherein you lie and to look on you with love in all the pollution with which you are disgraced! Come, then, and begin with Jesus! It is the necessary order of your coming—first to Christ and

 then to His yoke and to His peace. Let your faith exercise itself, not so much on what you ought to be, or on what you hope to be, as on what Christ is and on His ability to make you all that your heart pines after. Hear the good word of my text and give good heed to it. Note well the permission of heavenly love—“Let Israel hope in the Lord.”  
Observe, also, that, as it is the natural order and the necessary order, so it is evidently the easiest order. Sometimes it seems, to a burdened heart, to be more than difficult to believe in the pardon of innumerable sins—it appears impossible. Guilty One, do not try to believe in pardon in the abstract, but believe in Jesus the Sacrifice and Savior, who has once and for all appeared to put away sin. Believe in the Divine Substitute and then you will believe that the forgiveness of your sins is a thing provided for by Him. Do not even say, “I can never be sanctified. Such a wretched sinner as I am could never be made into a saint.” Do not try to believe in sanctification, but rely upon the boundless power of Jesus to “make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight.” For all parts of salvation, hope in the Lord and look to His hands for the working thereof. Forget yourself, now, and only think of Him who works all things according to the good pleasure of His will. Cease looking for the water and look for the Well! You will more readily see the Savior than see salvation, for He is lifted up, even He who is God, and beside Him there is none else. You will more easily fix your eyes on Jesus than upon justification, sanctification, or any other separate blessing. When the work seems hard, look to His hands—“Is anything too hard for the Lord?”  
You may fix your eyes upon a Covenant promise till it dazzles you, but if you see Jesus, the sight will strengthen your eyes and you will see the promise in Him—and perceive it to be, yes and amen, to the Glory of God. It is easier to believe in a personal Christ than in impersonal promises. That poor woman who was sick, in Jesus Christ’s day, might have said to herself, “It is impossible that I should be healed,” but then she thought not so much of the healing as of the Healer—and when she saw Jesus walking about among the crowds, healing all manner of diseases—and when she believed that God was in Him, why, then she inferred that He could heal her disease! And so she came up behind Him and touched the hem of His garment. She sought Him and so sought healing! Stay in this line—let not the devil take you from it—that the first object of your faith should be the Lord Jesus, for by Him, as the Ladder which God has set up, you can climb to the highest place of privilege and lay hold upon the choicest gift of Divine Grace!  
This is the way to God, Himself, and the only way which our human feet can tread. Consider well who Christ was and what He has done—and then you will conclude that He can save even you! By looking to Him, you will be saved and what is easier than to look? To hope in God is a far more simple matter than to search for signs and evidences in yourself, or to labor to force yourself up into certain states of mind. Answer the question, “Will He save me?” by looking to see what kind of a Savior Jesus is—and when you perceive the Glory of His Person, the perfection of His obedience and the merit of His blood—you will be convinced that you may safely trust in Him according to His command, for He commands you to believe! Jesus declares, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Let us come at once, for it is the nearest and best road to peace!  
To come, first of all, to God in Christ Jesus is the wisest course. You are too bewildered to know which blessing to seek, therefore seek Jesus, Himself, and He will be unto you wisdom! It is easier to come to the Cross than to the separate blessings which come of it. Take the straight road which lies plainly before your face.  
In faintness and trembling of heart we dare not appropriate a mercy— our palsied hands cannot grasp a favor and, therefore, it is our wisdom to fall at Jesus’ feet and let Him give us what seems good to Him. Through our ignorance, we know not what to ask for—and through our doubt we are afraid to ask—therefore, let us leave all with our Lord. We need the wine and oil, but we are sorely wounded and shall do well to lie still and let Him pour them in. When the Good Samaritan is come, all is come. Let us, therefore, neither cry for wine nor oil, but for HIM—we know His name! The wisdom of the prayer is seen in its completeness. At first, sinners, conscious of their ill desert, cry to be saved from Hell and this is the most of their prayer. But suppose the Lord should give them this and not change their natures—would they be one whit the better? If there were no fires of Tophet, so long as a man has sin within him, he creates his own Hell! In seeking the Lord Jesus, a man finds escape from punishment and much more. No man knows enough to be able to ask for an all-round salvation—he will only seek this or that which seems to him most pressingly necessary. We are too ignorant, too much the creatures of feeling, too partial, too childish to make a catalog of what we need. But we can ask for Jesus, and He is all in one! How excellent is that hymn of ours with the refrain—  
*“Give me Christ, or else I die!”*  
We have asked all when we have asked for the Savior anointed of the Lord. When our hope is in God through the Mediator whom He has appointed, we hope in Him in a way which renders our hope sure and steadfast—and this is the highest wisdom. In laying hold upon Jesus you have obtained not only something, but everything. In looking first to Jesus, you have sought for the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and you know the promise that all other things shall be added. If you need strength, comfort, guidance, fruitfulness and anything else that makes up eternal salvation, behold, you have it in your Lord! Nothing that is needed for a soul between this present state of trial and the perfection of Heaven is omitted from Christ—“you are complete in Him.” If, therefore, you make Him the first object of your faith, and lay hold upon Him, rather than upon any or all blessings, you are delivered from anxiety as to whether your ignorant prayers have comprehended all you need—and this is be a wise course to follow.  
It is, therefore, the most profitable course for needy souls like ourselves. By grasping our Lord and hoping in Him, we fill our hands, not with brass or silver, but with gold of Ophir. Let others hope where they may, but let Israel, the Prince, hope in the Lord from whom he has already won such royal favors. I see at times, in the newspaper, “Principals only will be dealt with,” and in our heavenly business we had better keep to this rule. Go not to the servants—make all your applications to the Master—and in your dealings with Him seek not so much His gifts as Himself, for the Giver is always greater than what He gives! The bottle of water which Hagar carried for Ishmael is a poor thing compared with that well of God beside which Isaac abode. Fruit from a choice tree is well, but apples of gold in baskets of silver are not to be despised. But, if one can have the tree planted in his own garden, he is far richer. Our Lord is the apple tree among the trees of the forest and, to possess HIM, is to have the best of the best, yes, all things that can be desired! Covenant blessings are streams, but our Lord Jesus is the Wellhead. Believe for the infinite, immutable, inexhaustible “deep which lies under,” and you may sink as many wells as you please.  
I believe that in every case wherein the soul finds peace, this is the actual order. We may go about after pardon, renewal and holiness, but we find no rest unto our souls while hunting for these. As a matter of fact, we look unto HIM and are lightened—and not by any other means. If, by aiming even at repentance, we are taken off from the Lord—we are taken off the right road. It is possible even to look to faith in such a manner as to forget the Object of faith! It is not my hand, but what my hand grasps that saves me when I lay hold on Christ! It is not my eye, but what my eyes see which saves me when I look to Jesus! In very deed no heart can find salvation in that which comes forth from itself—its hope lies only in the Lord, alone, to whom it must trust for everything. Beware of trusting to an anchor which lies on your own deck, or to a confidence which depends in the least degree on yourself. “Let Israel hope in the Lord.” Now the Lord is not self, nor will He be joined with self! The Lord is beyond and outside of all that the creation can find within, or hope to produce from itself. Mercy and redemption are with the Lord, not with self. Why, then, should we look where, in the very nature of things, those are not and cannot be? Why not look to the Lord, in whom, alone, all heavenly treasures abide?  
This, then, is my message to every man or woman who desires salvation, “Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption.” Do not begin by hoping in mercy and redemption, for these are not to be found apart from the Lord—but go at once to that Divine Person with whom there is mercy and plenteous redemption—then both of those will be granted to you. I wish I knew how to put this so plainly that every bewildered and cast-down spirit would catch my meaning and accept its counsel. I would also have preachers learn a lesson from the point I have been driving at. Let them not so much preach sinners to Christ as preach Christ to sinners. I am persuaded that a full and clear declaration of what Jesus is, as to His Person, offices, Character, work and authority would do more to produce faith than all our exhortations. “Whoever believes in Him has everlasting life”—but how shall they believe unless they hear of Him?  
The very best topic for the immediate conversion of men is Christ Crucified—the doctrine that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. I know one that came in here full of evil, living an unchaste life—and the text was, “He that believes in Him has everlasting life.” There would not seem to be anything about the sermon to convict of sin but the charming mercy of God won that heart, and that heart, being won by love, learned at once to hate evil and to serve the Lord Jesus in all that is pure, lovely and of good report! There sat in this very house, not long ago, side by side with one who is still in the service of Satan, a woman who had not attended the House of God for years. Nothing was heard but the simple proclamation of the Grace of God in Christ Jesus to the guilty—and she was shot down by the side of her companion—the thought of the amazing mercy and infinite love of God, in giving His Son to die, touched her heart and she began to weep. Immediately her companion upbraided her, but she answered, “I have found mercy.” That was enough for her—she made no other excuse for her emotion.

I pray that the same effects may follow this sermon. I bid you hope in the Lord! Look not to abstract mercy! Look not to any feelings or resolves in yourselves! Look not, even, to the hearing of the Word of God, or to promises, alone, but look to Jesus, who still lives, and who is in the midst of His people at this time, waiting to receive all who are willing to come to Him! While I tell you this, I am praying the Holy Spirit to bless the Word to your souls, so that, at once, without delay, you may look only to the Lord and may trust in Him and be saved! You are allowed to do so, for the text says, “Let Israel hope in the Lord.” If the Scripture permits, who shall forbid?  
II. Another form of the same Truth of God now invites our attention— ALL EXERCISES OF FAITH IN REFERENCE TO OTHER THINGS MUST BE IN CONNECTION WITH THE LORD. I began with our first exercise of faith, but I would not end there. As the stars called, “the Pointers,” always point to the polestar, so must our faith always look to God in Christ Jesus. Having begun with Jesus, our faith must not look elsewhere. Let Israel always hope in the Lord, for with Him is what she still requires. What do you need tonight, dear Friend? Ask, and you shall receive—but ask only of the Lord! Knock, but knock at the same door! Plead, but when you are pleading, still plead the name of Jesus! Whenever you are expecting a heavenly favor, expect it from the Father through His dear Son, by the Holy Spirit! Whenever you are longing, long for nothing more than there is in Christ! And whenever you obtain a mercy, remember that you have received it only because you have, by faith, received Jesus, and so have become a child of God. Whenever you rejoice in a mercy, take care that you do not so much glory in it as in the Lord from whom it came. Hope in the Lord and never have any hope in yourself, for that would be a fruitless, groundless, rootless, sapless hope! You are still to find mercy and plenteous redemption in the Lord alone.  
I am afraid that sometimes we seek mercies apart from God the Giver, or apart from Christ, the channel of their bestowal—and this is always ill of us. Avoid such dangerous error! I read in the papers, frequently, allusions to “Providence.” I know what I mean by Providence, but I do not know what the newspapers mean by it. I fear it is only a convenient phrase, a conventional expression which is not to be too carefully examined. They do not mean a living, foreseeing, providing, working Personality—that would be too much like religion! They admit a certain something, “a power which makes for righteousness,” a nonentity called, “Providence.” I have too often heard Christian people talk about thanking Providence. What is that? Do you mean, “thank God”? If so, say it boldly! It is God that provides. God arranges, God overrules, God works out His gracious designs! Again, how often do we hear of, “Nature” doing this and, “Nature” being that and, “Nature” producing the other! What do you mean? An infidel, some time ago, was speaking in the open air and he orated very eloquently about the elevating influences of Nature and what a blessing it was to study Nature. A friend in the crowd said to him, “That is very pretty, but would you have the goodness to tell me what Nature is, which does all this?” The orator answered tartly, “Every fool knows what Nature is.” “Well,” said the questioner, “then it will be easy to tell us.” “Nature,” said the speaker, “Well, Nature is Nature.”  
Just so. That is where it ended. And so it is with very many people when they talk about Providence or Nature. Let us not speak without knowing what we mean, or without declaring our meaning. We do not erect an altar and inscribe it TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. We know the Lord and are known of Him and, therefore, we should speak of Him as our hope, our trust, our joy! We know no Providence apart from JehovahJireh, the God who foresees and provides! To us there is no fickle chance, but the Lord reigns. Equally to us is there no blind, inexorable fate, but the Most High decrees and works out His wise and sovereign will! Therefore do not let God’s Israel talk as if they hoped in luck or fate, but let them, “hope in the Lord,” and acknowledge their reliance upon a personal God who is always working for them—“for with Him is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption.”  
Now, dear Brothers and Sisters, do you need mercy? In your prayers for pardoning mercy, quote the Savior’s Sacrifice. Do you need sparing mercy? Mention Him whom God did not spare in the great atoning day. Do you need restoring mercy? Plead Him whom God brought again from the dead! Do you need to behold the light of Jehovah’s Countenance? Plead Him who said, “Why have You forsaken Me?” In hoping for mercy, set the eyes of your hope upon the Lord Jesus and let no mercy be hoped for by you apart from Him! Remember what happened to Uzziah. He was a man of God and a king—but when he had grown very great, he thought that he would act as priest for himself. He went into the sanctuary of the Lord and burned incense on his own account—without the Lord’s appointed priest—and he was struck with leprosy! And not only was he thrust out of the Temple, but he, himself, hurried to get out!  
I tremble for those in whom I see any sign of going before God in right of their own character. I fear that among God’s own professing people there are some who are so conscious of their own knowledge and growth, that they pray without Christ, praise without Christ, and talk of being no longer in need of confessing sin! They dare to act without humbly depending upon the Presence of the great High Priest—and then they fall into sin and thus they are struck with leprosy and, perhaps, to their dying day they can never enter into such fellowship with God as once they knew. I would do nothing without Jesus! I would not even wish to repent except my eyes were upon the Cross. I would not hope to think a holy thought except as my soul still gazed upon Jesus my All. Away, away with every idea of mercy except it is mercy received through Jesus, for He, alone, is full of Grace and of His fullness must we receive! I would bind you, Brothers and Sisters, if I could, to the Cross as your one hope! I pray the Lord bind me forever to the Cross—the wounds my only fountains of hope, the blood and water my only cleansing! Go, you who have a righteousness of your own, and hope elsewhere! The only hope of my soul is the bleeding, dying, buried, risen, coming Savior! “Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy,” and with Him, alone! All the exercises of faith about mercy must always be tethered to the Cross. Mercy flows through Christ alone.  
So is it with “plenteous redemption.” What a grand utterance that is— “plenteous redemption!” I would like to dwell upon it. Is there not rare music in the sound? It means plenteous forgiveness for plenteous sin, through a price paid, a ransom given. Only in Christ can you find this! “With Him is plenteous redemption.” Do not dream of finding redemption in ordinances, in prayers, in tears, or in anything but the life and death and Person of the Son of God! “With Him is plenteous redemption.” He has paid a great price and, therefore, a great debt is blotted out! Great offenses are forgiven, but only through the precious blood of our adorable Redeemer.  
“Plenteous redemption.” Why, that means deliverance from the bondage of many lusts, freedom from the thralldom of strong passions, a ransom of captives from fierce taskmasters! My God, I long to be so delivered and redeemed! And there is with You all Grace, power and provision for plenteous deliverance by redemption—but this is found in Christ alone. I charge you, my Hearers, do not look for escape from the slavery of sin apart from the redemption of Christ! Do not expect to overcome the smallest sin except by the blood of the Lamb! There is nothing, I believe, more deceiving than the notion of the unregenerate heart that it is seeking after holiness—though it is destitute of the power of the Holy Spirit and takes no thought of the merit of Jesus Christ. We need much grace and plenteous redemption in fact—but all of all that we receive must come to us from the Lord, by Jesus Christ the Mediator!  
“Plenteous redemption” includes in its range of meaning great growth in Divine Grace, abounding usefulness, high spirituality and perfect preparedness for Heaven. For all these we must hope in the Lord, for they are with Him. Never think to have redemption in the least or in the highest degree apart from your hope in the Lord—your trusting in Christ Jesus.  
The pith and marrow of what I have said is this—hope distinctly in the Lord. There are many stars, but let one, alone, of all the train be the Object of your believing eye. Lay the foundation of your hope in the Lord! Go on building up your comfort in the Lord Jesus and in Him bring forth the top stone. Begin with Christ and end with Christ! As Christ grows more to you, take care that self grows less and less. If your Christianity puffs you up, it is not Christ’s Christianity. I spoke just now of King Uzziah, let me refer to him once more. Read in the Second of Chronicles, chapter 26, at the 15th verse—“He was marvelously helped, till he was strong.” When he became strong, he went off the lines and we read, “When he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction.” Mind that. God will always help us while we are weak. When we are strong—what shall I say? Then are we weak and have need to fear, for we are already being lifted up, or we should not count ourselves strong—poor, puny creatures that we are! God will always bless us as long as we confess our dependence upon His blessing. He will always fill us as long as we are empty! He will always feed us as long as we are hungry. He will be your All in All so long as you are nothing.  
But the moment you boast in yourself, and say, “I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing,” you will be left to learn that you are naked, poor and miserable! Woe was the day in which dust and ashes set up somebody! Nebuchadnezzar is proud and soon finds a rapid descent from the throne to eating grass like cattle! Worms, in the Presence of the Lord, do all they may do when they

 hope—they do all they can do when they hope in Him! They have nothing but sin and He has mercy upon them. They are slaves to evil, but He has plenteous redemption with which to set them free. The poorest, weakest, saddest among us may hope in the Lord, for He can do all things! Therefore, let us end our meeting with each one of us hoping in the Lord—and let us continue in our faith in “the God of hope”—till we receive the Heaven we hope for through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON— Psalm 130, John 3.**  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—551, 560, 538.

**A LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON: London, April 13, 1891.**

DEAR FRIENDS—This sermon is issued this week instead of the discourse of last Lord’s-Day morning because I am spending a few days in retirement so as to be rested and ready for the College Conference which commences April 20. This Conference is a great muster of ministers and my very soul is on fire with a desire for a special blessing from the Lord when I am addressing them and, indeed, through all the meetings. I would entreat every reader to pray that this Conference may be greatly influential in establishing the Brothers in the faith and in awakening in them a great passion for souls. By this means their churches and congregations will become partakers of the benefit. We need not merely “a little reviving,” but a second Pentecost! What we need we will seek, and what we seek we will expect. God has great things in reserve, which he will give in answer to prayer.

In the midst of the week, which some lovingly call the Feast of Tabernacles, one evening is given up to the College Annual Supper and, on that occasion, gifts are sent in for the support of THE COLLEGE. It would greatly cheer me if many of my readers who cannot be present in person, would, nevertheless, have fellowship in the work by sending in their help by April 22. The funds coming in for different parts of the Lord’s work under my care have been rather smaller of late. This causes me no anxiety, for the Lord can soon fill the coffers, but I think His people ought to be informed of it, lest any should suppose that their aid is not needed. I would be glad for help from all the members of my “larger congregation.”

Brothers and Sisters, I suggest—I do no more. And yet I do beg your prayers for the Lord’s work.  
Yours heartily, for Jesus’ sake,  
C. H. SPURGEON.

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PLENTEOUS REDEMPTION  
NO. 351

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH EVENING DECEMBER 16, 1860 BY THE REV. C. H. Spurgeon,**  
AT EXETER HALL, STRAND.

**“With Him is plenteous redemption.”  
Psalm 130:7.**

REDEMPTION is a word which has gladdened many ears when there was no heavenly sound in its blessed chime. Apart from any theological use of it, the word is a very sweet one and has been melodious to many hearts. In those days when piracy was carried on continually along the coast of Africa, when our fellow Christian subjects were caught by corsairs and carried away captive, you can well understand how the burdened soul of the manacled slave, chained to the oar of his galley, was gladdened by the hope that possibly there would be redemption.

His cruel master who had forced him into his possession, would not willingly emancipate him. But a rumor came that in some distant nation they had raised a sum of money to purchase the freedom of slaves—that some wealthy merchant had dedicated of his substance to buy back his fellow countrymen. That the king himself upon his throne had promised to give a liberal redemption that the captives among the Moors might return to their homes. Truly I can suppose the hours would run happily along and the dreariness of their toil would be assuaged when once that word “redemption” had sounded in their ears!

So with our fellow subjects and our fellow men who once were slaves in our West India settlements, we can well conceive that to their lips the word redemption must have been a very pleasing song. It must have been well nigh as sweet to them as the marriage peals to a youthful bridegroom, when they knew that the noble British nation would count down the twenty millions of their redemption money—that on a certain morning their fetters should be snapped asunder, so that they should no more go out to the plantations to sweat in the sun, driven by the whip—but they should call themselves their own and none should be their masters to possess their flesh and have property in their souls. You can conceive when the sun of that happy morn arose—when emancipation was proclaimed from sea to sea and the whole land was at liberty—how joyful must their new-found freedom have appeared. O there are many sonnets in that one word “redemption.”

Now you who have sold for nothing your glorious heritage. You who have been carried bond slaves into Satan’s dominion. You who have worn the fetters of guilt and groaned under them. You who have smarted beneath the lash of the Law. What the news of redemption has been to slaves and captives, that will it be to you tonight. It will cheer your souls and gladden your spirits and more especially so when that rich adjective is coupled with it—“plenteous redemption.”

This evening I shall consider the subject of redemption and then notice the adjective appended to the word: “plenteous redemption.”  
I. First, then, we shall consider the subject of REDEMPTION.  
I shall commence in this way, by asking, What has Christ redeemed? And in order to let you know what my views are upon this subject I would announce at once what I conceive to be an authoritative doctrine— consistent with common sense and declared to us by Scripture—namely that whatever Christ has redeemed—Christ will most assuredly have. I start with that as an axiom—that whatever Christ has redeemed—Christ must have. I hold it to be repugnant to reason and much more to Revelation, that Christ should die to purchase what He never shall obtain. And I hold it to be little less than blasphemy to assert that the intention of our Savior’s death can ever be frustrated. Whatever was Christ’s intention when He died—we lay it down as a very groundwork Truth which ought to be granted to us by every reasonable man—that Christ will most certainly gain.  
I cannot see how it can be that the intention of God in anything can be frustrated. We have always thought God to be so superior to creatures that when He has once intended a thing it must most assuredly be accomplished. And if I have that granted to me, I cannot for a moment allow you to imagine that Christ should shed His blood in vain. Nor that He should die with an intention of doing something and yet should not perform it—that He should die with a full intention in His heart and with a promise on the part of God that a certain thing should be given to Him as a reward of His sufferings—and yet should fail to obtain it.  
I start with that. And I think that everyone who will weigh the matter and truly consider it, must see it to be so—that Christ’s intention in His death must be fulfilled and that the design of God, whatever that may be, must certainly be carried out. Well then, I believe that the efficacy of Christ’s blood knows no other limit than the purpose of God. I believe that the efficacy of Christ’s atonement is just as great as God meant it should be and that what Christ redeemed is precisely what He meant to redeem and exactly what the Father had decreed He should redeem.  
Therefore I cannot for one moment give any credence whatever to that doctrine which tells us that all men are redeemed. Some may hold it, as I know they do and hold it very strongly and even urge it as being a fundadamental part of the doctrine of revelation. They are welcome to it. This is a land of liberty. Let them hold their views but I must tell them solemnly my persuasion that they cannot hold such doctrine if they do but well consider the matter. For if they once believe in universal redemption, they are driven to the blasphemous inference that God’s intention is frustrated and that Christ has not received what He died to procure. If, therefore, they can believe that, I will give them credit for being able to believe anything. And I shall not despair of seeing them landed at the Salt Lake, or in any other region where enthusiasm and credulity can flourish without the checks of ridicule or reason.  
Starting then, with this assumption, I beg now to tell you what I believe according to sound doctrine and Scripture. Christ has really redeemed. His redemption is a very compendious redemption. He has redeemed many things. He has redeemed the souls of His people. He has redeemed the bodies of His people. He has redeemed the original inheritance which man lost in Adam. He has redeemed, in the last place, the world, considered in a certain sense—in the sense in which He will have the world at last.  
Christ has redeemed the souls of all His people who shall ultimately be saved. To state it after the Calvinistic form Christ has redeemed His elect. But since you do not know His elect until they are revealed, we will alter that and say, Christ has redeemed all penitent souls. Christ has redeemed all believing souls. And Christ has redeemed the souls of all those who die in infancy—seeing it is to be received that all those who die in infancy are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life and are graciously privileged by God to go at once to Heaven—instead of toiling through this weary world. The souls of all those who were written before all worlds in the Lamb’s Book of Life, who in process of time are humbled before God, who in due course are led to lay hold of Christ Jesus as the only refuge of their souls, who hold on their way and ultimately attain to Heaven—these, I believe were redeemed—and I most firmly and solemnly believe the souls of none other men were in that sense subjects of redemption.  
I do not hold the doctrine that Judas was redeemed. I could not conceive my Savior bearing the punishment for Judas, or if so how could Judas be punished again? I could not conceive it possible that God should exact first at Christ’s hands the penalty of his sin and then at the sinner’s hands again. I cannot conceive for a moment that Christ should have shed His blood in vain. And though I have read in the books of certain Divines that Christ’s blood is fuel for the flames of Hell, I have shuddered at the thought and have cast it from me as being a dreadful assertion, perhaps worthy of those who made it, but utterly unsupported by the Word of God. The souls of God’s people, whoever they may be and they are a multitude that no man can number—and I could fondly hope they are all of you—are redeemed effectually.

Briefly, they are redeemed in three ways. They are redeemed from the guilt of sin, from the punishment of sin and from the power of sin. The souls of Christ’s people have guilt on account of sin until they are redeemed. But when once redemption is applied to my soul, my sins are every one of them from that moment forever blotted out—  
*“The moment a sinner believes,  
And trusts in his crucified Lord,  
His pardon at once he receives,  
Salvation in full through His blood.”*  
The guilt of our sin is taken away by the redemption of Christ. Whatever sin you may have committed, the moment you believe in Christ not only will you never be punished for that sin, but the very guilt of that sin is taken from you. You cease to be in God’s sight any longer a guilty person. You are reckoned by God as a justified believer to have the righteousness of Christ about you. And therefore, you can say—to recall a verse which we often repeat—  
*“Now freed from sin I walk at large  
My Savior’s blood’s my full discharge;  
At His dear feet my soul I lay,  
A sinner saved and homage pay.”*  
Every sin, every particle of guilt, every atom of transgression is by the redemption of Christ, effectually taken away from all the Lord’s believing family.  
And mark, next—not only the guilt, but the punishment of sin is taken away. In fact, when we cease to be guilty, we cease to be the objects of punishment altogether. Take away the guilt—the punishment is gone. But to make it more effectual, it is as it were written over again that condemnation is taken away, as well as the sin for which we might be condemned. “There is, therefore, now, no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” None of those who were redeemed by Christ can ever be damned. They can never be punished on account of sin, for Christ has suffered their punishment in their place and therefore, they cannot— unless God is unjust—be sued a second time for debts already paid. If Christ, their ransom died, they cannot die.  
If He, their Surety, paid their debt, then unto God’s justice they no longer owe anything for Christ has paid it all. If He has shed His blood, if He has yielded up the ghost, if He has “died, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God,” how, then, would God be Just and yet the punisher of those whom He has already punished once in the Person of Jesus Christ their Savior? No, Beloved, through the plenteous redemption of Christ we are delivered from all punishment on account of sin and from all guilt which we had incurred thereby.  
Moreover the believing family of Christ—or rather, all for whom He died—are most effectually delivered from the power of sin. Oh, there are some who suck in the two truths I have been mentioning, as if they were honey—but they cannot endure this other point—Christ delivers us from the power of sin. Mark you this, then—we affirm it very strongly—no man can ever be redeemed from the guilt of sin or from the punishment of sin, unless he is at the same time delivered from the power of sin. Unless he is made by God to hate his own sin. Unless he is enabled to cast it to the ground. Unless he is made to abhor every evil way and to cleave unto God with full purpose of heart, walking before Him in the land of the living, in the strength of the Holy Spirit—such a man has no right to believe himself redeemed.  
If you are still under the dominion of your lusts, O wicked Sinner, you have no right to think yourself a purchased heir of Heaven. If you can be drunk, if you can swear, if you can curse God, if you can lie, if you can profane the Sabbath, if you can hate His people, if you can despise His Word then you have no right whatever, any more than Satan in Hell, to boast that you are redeemed. For all the Lord’s redeemed are in due time brought out of the house of bondage, out of the land of Egypt and they are taught the evil of sin, the horrible penalty of it and the desperate character of it in the sight of God. Are you delivered from the power of sin, my Hearer? Have you mortified it? Are you dead unto it? Is it dead unto you? Is it crucified unto you and you unto it?  
Do you hate it as you would a viper? Do you tread on it as you would tread upon a serpent? If you do, albeit there be sins of frailty and infirmity, yet if you hate the sin of your heart, if you have an unutterable enmity to it, take courage and comfort. The Lord has redeemed you from the guilt and penalty and also from the power of sin. That is the first point of redemption. And hear me distinctly again, lest any should mistake me—I always like to preach so that there can be no mistake about it. I do not want to so preach that you will say in the judgment of charity, “He could not have meant what he said.”  
Now, I mean solemnly again to say what I have said—that I do believe that none others were redeemed than those who are or shall be redeemed from the guilt, the punishment and the power of sin. I say again—it is abhorrent to my reason, much less to my views of Scripture—to conceive that the damned ever were redeemed and that the lost in perdition were ever washed in the Savior’s blood, or that His blood was ever shed with an intention of saving them.  
2. Now let us think of the second thing Christ has redeemed. Christ has redeemed the bodies of all His children. In that day when Christ redeemed our souls, He redeemed the tabernacles in which our souls dwell. At the same moment when the spirit was redeemed by blood, Christ who gave His human soul and His human body to death, purchased the body as well as the soul of every believer. You ask, then, in what way redemption operates upon the body of the believer? I answer, first, it ensures it a resurrection. Those for whom Christ died, are ensured by His death a glorious resurrection. “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ, shall all be made alive.”  
All men are by virtue of the death of Christ quickened to a resurrection—but even here there is a special property of the elect—seeing that they are quickened to a blessed resurrection, while others are quickened only to a cursed resurrection. A resurrection of woe, a resurrection of unutterable anguish. O Christian, your body is redeemed—  
*“What though your inbred sins require  
Your flesh to see the dust,  
Yet, as the Lord your Savior rose,  
So all His followers must.”*  
What? Though in a little time I shall slumber in the tomb, though worms devour this body, I know that my Redeemer lives and because He lives I know that in my flesh I shall see God.  
These eyes which soon shall be glazed in death shall not be always closed in darkness—death shall be made to give back his prey. He shall restore all that he has taken. Lo, I see him there! He has the bodies of the just locked up in his dungeons. They are wrapped up in their cerements and he thinks they are secure—he has sealed their tombs and marked them for his own. O Death! Foolish Death! Your caskets shall be rifled. Your storehouses shall be broken open. Lo, the morning is come! Christ has descended from on high. I hear the trump, “Awake! Awake!” And lo, from their tombs, the righteous start—while Death sits in confusion howling in vain—to find his empire all bereft of its subjects—to find all his dungeons rifled of their prey.  
“Precious shall their blood be in His sight.” Precious shall be their bones! Their very dust is blessed and Christ shall raise them with Himself. Think of that, you that have lost friends—you weeping children of sorrow! Your redeemed friends shall live again. The very hands that grasped yours with a death clutch shall grasp them in Paradise. Those very eyes that wept themselves away in tears, shall, with eye-strings that never shall be broken, wake up in the noonday of felicity. That very frame which you did sorrowfully convey with dread attire of a funeral to bury in its tomb—yes, that self-same body, made like the image of Jesus Christ, spiritualized and changed, but nevertheless the selfsame body, shall rise again.  
And you, if you are redeemed, shall see it—for Christ has purchased it and Christ shall not die in vain. Death will not have one bone of the righteous—no, not a particle of their dust—no, not a hair of their heads. It shall all come back. Christ has purchased all our body and the whole body shall be completed and united forever in Heaven with the glorified soul. The bodies of the righteous are redeemed and redeemed for eternal happiness.  
3. In the next place, all the possessions of the righteous which were lost in Adam are redeemed. Adam! Where are you? I have a controversy with you, Man, for I have lost much by you. Come here. Adam! You see what you are now, tell me what you once were. Then I shall know what I have lost by you and then I shall be able to thank my Master that all you did lose He has freely bought back to all believers. What did you lose? “Alas!” cries Adam, “I had a crown once. I was king of all the world. The beasts crouched at my feet and did me reverence. God made me that I might have supreme command over the cattle upon the hills and over all fowls of the air. But I lost my crown. I had a miter once,” said Adam, “for I was a priest to God and oftentimes in the morning did I climb the hills and sing sweet prayers of praise to Him that made me. My censer of praise has often smoked with incense and my voice has been sweet with praise.  
“Oft have I bid misty exhalations. Sun and moon and stars sing His praise. Daily have I bid the herds upon the hills low out His glories and the lions roar His honors. Nightly have I told the stars to shine out and the little flowers to blossom forth. But ah, I lost my miter and I, who was once a priest to God, ceased any longer to be His holy servant.” Ah, Adam, you have lost me much. But yonder I see my Savior. He takes His crown off His head, that He may put a crown on my head. And He puts a miter on His head, to be a priest, that He may put a miter on my head, too—and on the head of all His people—for, as we have just been singing— *“You have redeemed our souls with blood,  
Have set the prisoners free;  
Have made us kings and priests to God,  
And we shall reign with You.”*  
Just what Adam lost—the kingship and the priesthood of Christ—is won for all His believing people. And what else did you lose, Adam? “Why, I lost Paradise.” Hush, Man! Say nothing upon that. For Christ has bought me a Paradise worth ten thousand such Edens as yours. So we can well forgive you that. And what else did you lose? “Why, I lost the image of my Maker.” Ah, hush, Adam! In Jesus Christ we have something more than that. For we have the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ and surely that is even better than the image of the Maker—for it is the very dress and robe that the Maker wore. So, Adam, all that you have lost I have again. Christ has redeemed all that we sold for nothing. I who have sold for nothing a heritage Divine, shall have it back unbought—the gift of love, says Christ, even Mine. Oh, hear it, then! The trump of Jubilee is blown. Christ has redeemed the lost possessions of His people.

4. And now I come to the last thing that Christ has redeemed, though not the last point of the discourse. Christ has redeemed the world. “Well, now,” says one, “that is strange, Sir. You are going to contradict yourself flatly.” Stop a moment. Understand what I mean by the world, if you please. We do not mean every man, in it. We never pretended such a thing. But I will tell you how Christ has redeemed the world. When Adam fell God cursed the world with barrenness. “Thorns also and briars shall it bring forth unto you and in the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread.” God cursed the earth. When Christ came into the world they twisted a crown made of the cursed thorn and they put that on His head and made Him king of the curse. And in that day He purchased the redemption of the world from its curse.  
And it is my very belief and I think it is warranted by Scripture that when Christ shall come a second time, this world will become everywhere as fertile as the garden of Paradise used to be. I believe that Sahara, the literal desert, shall one day blossom like Sharon and rejoice like the garden of the Lord. I do not conceive that this poor world is to be a forlorn planetary wanderer forever. I believe that she is yet to be clothed with verdure, such as she once wore. We have evidences in the beds of coal underneath the earth that this world was once much more fertile than it is now.  
Gigantic trees once spread their mighty arms and I had almost said one arm of a tree in that day would have built half a forest for us now. Then mighty creatures, far different from ours, stalked through the earth. And I believe firmly that a luxuriant vegetation, such as this world once knew shall be restored to us and that we shall see again a garden such as we have not known. No more cursed with blight and mildew, with no more blast and withering we shall see a land like Heaven itself—  
*“Where everlasting spring abides,  
And never withering flowers.”*  
When Christ comes He shall do even this.  
In the day of the Fall, too, it is currently believed that animals for the first time received their ferocious temperament and began to prey on each other—of this we are not sure. But if I read Scripture rightly, I find that the lion shall lie down with the kid and that the leopard shall eat straw like the ox and that the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den. I do believe that in millennial years that are coming and coming soon, there shall be known no more devouring lions, no blood-thirsty tigers, no creatures that shall devour their kind. God shall restore to us again and even to the beasts of the field the blessing which Adam lost.  
And, my Friends, there is a worse curse than that which has fallen on this world. It is the curse of ignorance and sin—that, too, is to be removed. See yonder planet? It is whirling along through space—bright, bright and glorious. Hear the morning stars sing together because this new sister theirs is made? That is the earth. She is bright now. Stay! Did you remark that shadow sweep across her? What caused it? The planet is dimmed and on her trace there lies a sorrowful shadow. I am speaking, of course, metaphorically. See there the planet. She glides along in ten-fold night—scarcely does a speck of light irradiate her. Mark again—the day is not come, when that planet shall renew her glory—but it is hastening again.  
As the serpent slips its slough and leaves it behind it in the valley, so yon planet has slipped its clouds and shone forth bright as it was before. Do you ask who has done it? Who has cleared away the mist? Who has taken away the darkness? Who has removed the clouds? “I have done it,” says Christ, the Sun of righteousness. “I have scattered darkness and made that world bright again.” Lo, I see a new Heaven and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness. To explain myself, lest I should be mistaken, I mean this—this world is now covered with sin, ignorance, mistake, idolatry and crime. The day is coming when the last drop of blood shall be drunk by the sword. It shall be no more intoxicated with blood. God shall make wars to cease unto the ends of the earth.  
The day is coming—oh that it were now!—when the feet of Christ shall tread this earth. Then down shall go idols from their thrones. Down superstitions from their pinnacles. Then slavery shall cease. Then crime shall end. Then peace shall spread its halcyon wings over all the world. And then shall you know that Christ has died for the world and that Christ has won it. “The whole creation,” said Paul, “groans and travails in pain together until now.” Waiting for what? “Waiting for the redemption.” And by the redemption, I understand what I have just explained to you— that this world shall be washed of all her sin. Her curse shall be removed, her stains taken away and this world shall be as fair as when God first struck her from His mind—as when like a glowing spark, smitten from the anvil by the eternal hammer she first flashed in her orbit. This Christ has redeemed. This, Christ shall and most assuredly must have.  
II. And, now, a word or two concerning the last thought—“PLENTEOUS REDEMPTION.”  
It is plenteous enough, if you consider what I have already told you Christ has bought. Surely I could have made it no more plenteous if I had lied against my conscience and told you that He had bought every man. For of what use is it that I am bought with blood, if I am lost? Of what use is it to me that Christ has died for me, if I yet sink in the flames of Hell? How will that glorify Christ—that He has redeemed me and yet failed in His intentions? Surely it is more to His honor to believe that according to His immutable, sovereign and all-wise will, He laid the foundation as wide as He intended the structure to be and then made it just according to His will. Nevertheless, it is “plenteous redemption.” Very briefly, lend me your ears just a moment.  
It is “plenteous” when we consider the millions that have been redeemed. Think, if you can, how great that host who have already washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. And then think how many now with weary feet are plodding their way to Paradise— all of them redeemed. They all shall sit down at the marriage supper of the Lamb. Is it not “plenteous redemption” when you reflect that it is a “multitude that no man can number” that will be gathered in? Let us close that by saying, “And why not you?” If so many are redeemed, why should not you be? Why should you not seek for mercy on the strength of that, knowing that all who seek will most assuredly receive, for they would not have sought unless it had been prepared for them?  
It is “plenteous,” again, if we consider the sins of all who are redeemed. However great the sins of any redeemed soul, this redemption is enough to cover it all—to wash it all away —  
*“What though your numerous sins exceed  
The stars that spread the skies,  
And aiming at the eternal Throne,  
Like pointed mountains rise.”*  
This plenteous redemption can take all your sins away. They are no greater than Christ foresaw and vowed to remove. Therefore, I beseech you, fly to Jesus believing that however great your guilt, His atonement is great enough for all who come to Him and therefore you may safely come.  
Remember, again, that this “plenteous redemption” is plenteous because it is enough for all the distresses of all the saints. Your wants are almost infinite. But this atonement is quite so. Your troubles are almost unutterable. But this atonement is quite unutterable. Your needs you can scarce tell. But this redemption I know you cannot tell. Believe, then, that it is a “plenteous redemption.” O believing Sinner, what a sweet comfort it is for you, that there is “plenteous redemption” and that you have a lot in it. You will most certainly be brought safely home by Jesus’ grace. Are you seeking Christ? Or rather do you know yourselves to be sinners? If you do, I have authority from God to say to everyone who will confess his sins that Christ has redeemed him. “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” Are you a sinner? I do not mean a sham sinner. There are lots of them about, but I have no Gospel to preach to them just now. I do not mean one of those hypocritical sinners, who cry, “Yes, I am a sinner”—who are sinners out of compliment and do not mean it. I will preach another thing to you—I will preach against your selfrighteousness another day. But I shall not preach anything to you just now about Christ, for He “came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”  
But are you a sinner, in the bona fide sense of the word? Do you know yourself to be a lost, ruined, undone sinner? Then in God’s name I urge you to believe this—that Christ has died to save you. For as sure as ever He has revealed to you your guilt by the Holy Spirit, He will not leave you till He has revealed to you your pardon by His only Son. If you know your lost estate you shall soon know your glorious estate. Believe in Jesus now. Then you are saved and you may go away happy—blest beyond what kings could dream.  
Believe that since you are a sinner Christ has redeemed you—that just because you know yourself to be undone, guilty, lost and ruined—you have this night a right, a privilege and a title to bathe in the fountain filled with blood, “shed for many for the remission of sins.” Believe that and then you shall know the meaning of this text—“Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, by whom also we have received the atonement.” God dismiss you with a blessing, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

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THE WEANED CHILD  
NO. 1210

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.  
“My soul is even as a weaned child.”  
Psalm 131:2.

I was once conversing with a very excellent aged minister and while we were talking about our attitude and feelings, he made the following confession—he said, “When I read that passage in the Psalm, ‘My soul is even as a weaned child,’ I wish it were true of me, but I think I should have to make an alteration of one syllable and then it would exactly describe me at times—‘My soul is even as a weaning rather than a weaned child,’ for,” said he, “with the infirmities of old age, I fear I get fretful and peevish and anxious. And when the day is over I do not feel that I have been in so calm, resigned and trustful a frame of mind as I could desire.”

I suppose, dear Brothers and Sisters, that frequently we have to make the same confession. We wish we were like a weaned child, but we find ourselves neglecting to walk by faith and getting into the way of walking by the sight of our eyes. And then we get like the weaning child which is fretting and worrying, and unrestful and who causes trouble to those round about it and, most of all, trouble to itself. Weaning was one of the first real troubles that we met with after we came into this world and it was, at the time, a very terrible one to our little hearts. We got over it somehow or other. We do not remember, now, what a trial it was to us, but we may take it as a type of all troubles, for if we have faith in Him who was our God from our mother’s breasts, as we got over the weaning and do not even remember it, so we shall get over all the troubles that are to come and shall scarcely remember them for the joy that will follow.

If, indeed, Dr. Watts is correct in saying that when we get to Heaven we shall, “recount the labors of our feet,” then, I am quite sure that we shall only do it, as he says, “with transporting joy.” There, at least, we shall be, each one of us, as a weaned child. It is a very happy condition of heart which is here indicated—and I shall speak about it with a desire to promote the increase of such a state of heart among Believers—and with the hope that many of us may reach it and all of us who have reached it may continue to say, “My soul is even as a weaned child.”

I. First, let us think WHAT THE PSALMIST INTENDED BY THIS DESCRIPTION. We will begin by noticing the context, in order to understand him, and then we will consider the metaphor in order, still further, to see what he literally meant. First, look at the context and you will see that he intended that pride had been subdued in him and driven out of him, for he commences the Psalm with this, “Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor my eyes lofty.” We are all proud by nature, though there is not one among us that has anything to be proud of! It makes no difference what our condition is—we universally dream that we have something to glory about.

The Lord Mayor is not a bit prouder in his gold chain than the beggar in his rags. Indeed, pride is a kind of weed that will grow on very poor soil quite as freely as in the best cultivated garden. Every man thinks more of himself than God thinks of him, for when a man is in his highest estate and at his best, he is nothing but dust and the Lord knows his constitution and remembers that he is just that and nothing better. Some poor creatures, however, indulge their pride and let it run away with them as a wild horse with its rider. They cannot be trusted with a little money but straightway they hold their heads so high that one might think the stars in danger! They cannot be trusted with a little talent but straightway their genius is Omnipotent, in their own opinion, and they, themselves, are to be treated like demi-gods.

And if they are God’s servants, they cannot have a little success in the ministry or in the Sunday school without becoming quite unpleasant to those round about them through their boastful ways and eagerness to talk of self. Scarcely can they have enjoyment, even of the Presence of God, but what they begin to make an idol of their attainments and Graces, and begin to say, “My mountain, my mountain, stands firm. I, I shall never be moved.” Great I grows without any watering, for the soil of nature is muddy and the rush of pride takes to it mightily!. You need never be troubled about a man’s keeping up his opinion of himself—he will be pretty sure to do that—the force of nature usually runs in the direction of self-conceit.

This pride very often leads to haughtiness, domineering ways towards others and contempt of them—as if they were not as good as we are. And if we see any errors and mistakes in them, we conclude that they are very foolish and that we would act much better if we were in their position. If they act nobly and well, this same pride of ours leads us to pick holes in them and to detract from their excellence. And if we cannot get up as high as they are, we try to pull them down to our own level. This is a base thing to do, but the proud man is always mean. Loftiness of looks and meanness of heart run, with him, like a couple of hounds in a leash.

The humble man is the truly great man! Because God’s gentleness has made him great, he is sure to be kept lowly before the Lord by the Holy Spirit. The proud man is really little—no, more—he is really nothing even in the things in which he boasts. David could say, “My heart is not haughty.” His brother, Eliab, said that David was proud when he went down to carry his father’s present to his soldier brothers, but it was not so. His heart was content to be with the sheep—he was quite willing to follow the “ewes great with young.” When he was in Saul’s court, they thought him ambitious, but he was not so—he was quite satisfied to be a servant there, to fight the battles of Israel. The place of captain over a wandering band was forced upon him, but he would sooner have dwelt at home. And when he was king he did not exalt himself.

Absalom, when he was aspiring to the kingdom, was a far greater man to look at than his father David, for David walked in lowliness of spirit before the Lord. Whatever faults he had, he certainly had not the fault of vanity, or of being intoxicated in spirit with what God had done for him. Now, it is a great blessing when the Spirit of God keeps us from being haughty and our looks from being lofty. We shall never be as a weaned child till it gets to that, for a weaned child thinks nothing of itself. It is but a little babe! Whatever consciousness it has at all about the matter, it is not conscious of any strength or any wisdom! It is entirely dependent upon its mother’s care.

And blessed is that man who is brought to lie very low in his own spirit before the Lord, resting on the bosom of Infinite Love. After all, Brothers and Sisters, we are nobodies and we have come from a line of nobodies! The proudest peer of the realm may trace his pedigree as far as ever he likes, but he ought to remember that if his blood is blue, it must be very unhealthy to have such blood in one’s veins! The common ruddy blood of the peasant is, after all, far healthier! Big as men may account themselves to be on account of their ancestors, we all trace our line up to a gardener who lost his place through stealing his Master’s fruit—and that is the farthest we can possibly go. Adam covers us all with disgrace and under that disgrace we should all humbly sit.

Look into your own heart and if you dare to be proud, you have never seen your heart at all! It is a mass of pollution! It is a den of filthiness! Apart from Divine Grace your heart is a seething mass of putrefaction and if God’s eternal Spirit were not to hold it in check, but to let your nature have its way—envy, lust, murder and every foul thing would come flying forth in your daily life! A sinner and yet proud? It is monstrous! As for children of God, how can they be proud? I fear we are all too much so. But what have we to be proud of? What have we that we have not received? How, then, can we boast? Are we dressed in the robe of Christ’s Righteousness? We did not put a thread into it—it was all given us by the charity of Jesus!

Are our garments white? We have washed them in the blood of the Lamb. Are we new creatures? We have been created anew by Omnipotent power or we should still be as we were. Are we holding on our way? It is God that enables us to persevere, or we should long ago have gone back. Have we been kept from the great transgression? Who has kept us? We certainly have not kept ourselves! There is nothing that we have of which we can say, “I did this and it is all my own”—except our faults and our sins—and over these we ought to blush.

Yet, Brothers and Sisters, when the Lord favors us, especially in early life—though I do not know but what it is almost as much so with us who have got a little farther on—if you get a full sail and a favoring breeze, and the vessel scuds along before the wind, there is need of a great deal of ballast or else there will soon be a tale to tell of a vessel that was upset and a sailor who was too venturesome and was never heard of again! We have need continually to be kept lowly before God, for pride is the besetting sin of mankind. O, that God would give us to be as David was—not haughty,

neither our eyes lofty. This is the first help towards being as a weaned child.

And next he tells us that he was not ambitious—“Neither do I exercise myself in great matters.” He was a shepherd. He did not need to go and fight Goliath, but when he did do it, it was because his nation needed him. He said, “Is there not a cause?” Otherwise he had stayed in the background. When he went into the cave of Adullam, he never lifted a hand to become king. He might have struck his enemy several times—and with one stroke have ended the warfare and seized the throne—but he would not lift a hand against the Lord’s Anointed, for, like a weaned child, he was not ambitious. He was willing to go where God would put him, but he was not seeking after great things.

Now, dear Brethren, we shall never be as a weaned child if we have high notions of what we ought to be and large desires for self. If we are great men in our own esteem, of course we ought to have great things for ourselves. But if we

 know ourselves and are brought into a true condition of mind, we shall avoid those “vaulting ambitions which leap over themselves.” For instance, we shall not be hankering after great possessions. “Having food and raiment” we shall be “therewith content.” If God adds to our store of the comforts of life, we shall be grateful. We shall be diligent in business, but we shall not be greedy and miserly. “While others stretch their arms, like seas, to grasp in all the shore,” we shall be content with far less things, for we know that greed after earthly riches brings with it slackness of desire as to true riches. The more hungry a man is after this world, the less he pines after the treasures of the world to come.

We shall not be covetous if we are like a weaned child. Neither shall we sigh for position and influence—whoever heard of a weaned child doing that? Let it lie in its parent’s bosom and it is content—and so shall we be in the bosom of our God. Yet some Christian men seem as if they could not pull unless they are the fore horse of the team. They cannot work with others, but must have the chief place, contrary to the word of the Apostle who says, “My Brethren, be you not many masters, lest you receive the greater condemnation.” Blessed is that servant who is quite content with that position which his master appoints him—glad to unloose the laces of his Lord’s shoes—glad to wash the saints’ feet—glad to engage in sweeping a crossing for the king’s servants.

Let us do anything for Jesus, counting it the highest honor, even, to be a doormat inside the Church of God, if we might be such a thing as that for the saints to remove the filthiness from themselves upon us—so long as we may but be of some use to them and bring some glory to God. You remember the word of Jeremiah to Baruch? Baruch had been writing the roll for the Prophet and straightway Baruch thought he was somebody. He had been writing the Word of the Lord, had he not? But the Prophet said to him, “Seek you great things for yourself? Seek them not.” And so says the mind of the Spirit to us all. Do not desire to occupy positions of eminence and prominence, but let your soul be as a weaned child—not exercising itself in great matters.

Very often we seek after great approbation. We want to do great deeds that people will talk about and especially some famous work which everybody will admire. This is human nature, for the love of approbation is rooted in us. As the old rhyme puts it—

*“The proud to gain it, toils on toils endures. The modest shun it but to make it sure.”*

But that man has arrived at the right position who has become, “careless, himself a dying man, of dying man’s esteem.” It is he who judges what is right before God and does it caring neither for public nor private opinion in the matter—to whom it is no more concern what people may say of an action which his conscience commends than what tune the north wind whistles as it blows over the Alps! He who is the slave of man’s opinions is a slave, indeed. I would sooner go to some barbarous climate where yet the slave whip would fall upon my shoulders and the cruel fetter would chain me to the floor, than live in dread of such a thing as I myself, and tremble with fear of offending this man and the other by doing what I believe to be right. He who fears God needs fear no one else! But he who reaches that point has undergone a painful weaning and had it not been for that he would not be able to say, “My soul is even as a weaned child.”

Frequently, too, we exercise ourselves in great matters by having a high ambition to do something very wonderful in the Church. This is why so very little is done! The great destroyer of good works is the ambition to do great works! A little thing can be done by a Christian Brother very well. But if it strikes him, “I will organize a society to do it and a committee, a secretary, a president, and a vice-president,” (it being well known that nothing can be done till you get a committee, a president and all that kind of thing), the Brother soon hampers himself and his work ends in resolutions and reports—and nothing more.

But the Brother who says, “Here is a district which nobody visits. I will do what I can in it”—he is probably the man who will get another to help him and another, and the work will be done! The young man who is quite content to begin with preaching in a little room in a village to a dozen, is the man who will win souls! The other Brother, who does not begin preaching till he can preach to 5,000 will never do anything—he never can. I read of a king who always wanted to take the second step first, but he was not a Solomon! There are many such about, not kings but common people, who do not want to do the first thing, the thing they can do, the thing which God calls them to do, the thing they ought to do! No, they must do something great.

O, dear Brother, if your soul ever gets to be as it ought, you will feel, “The least thing that I can do, I shall be glad to do. The very poorest and meanest form of Christian service, as men think it, is better than I deserve.” It is a great honor to be allowed to unloose the laces of my Lord’s shoes! A young man who once had a small charge and only about 200 hearers, complained to an old minister that he wished he could move somewhere else. But the old one said, “Do not be in a hurry, Brother. The

responsibility of 200 souls is quite a heavy load enough for most of us to carry.” And so it is. We need not be so eager to load ourselves with more.

He is the best draftsman, not who draws the largest, but the most perfect circle. If the circle is perfect, nobody finds fault with it because it is not large. Fill your sphere, Brother, and be content with it. If God shall move you to another, be glad to be moved. If He moves you to a smaller, be as willing to go to a less prominent place as to one that is more so. Have no will about it. Be a weaned child that has given up fretting, crying, worrying and leaves its mother to do just what seems good in her sight. When we are thoroughly weaned it is well with us—pride is gone and ambition is gone, too. We shall need much nursing by One who is wiser and gentler than the best mother before we shall be quite weaned of these two dearly beloved sins.

Next, David tells us he was not intrusive—“Neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.” I have seen many men always vexed and troubled because they would exercise themselves in things too high for them. These things too high for them have been many but I will mention only a few. They have expected to comprehend everything and have never been satisfied because many Truths of God are far above and out of their reach. They have expected, especially, to know all the deep things of God—the Doctrine of Election and how predestination coincides with the free agency of man, and how God orders everything and yet man is responsible—just as responsible as if there had been no foreknowledge and no foreordination.

It is folly to hope to know these “things too high for us.” Here is a little child that has just come off its mother’s knee and it expects to understand a book on trigonometry and cries because it cannot? And here is another little child that has been down to the sea and is fretting and kicking in its nurse’s arms because it cannot get the Atlantic into the hollow of its hand? Well, it will have to kick, that will be the end of it. But it is fretting itself for nothing, without any real use or need for its crying, because a little child’s palm cannot hold an ocean. Yet a child might sooner hold the Atlantic and Pacific in its two hands, without spilling a drop, than you and I will ever be able to hold all the revealed Truth of God within the compass of our narrow minds!

We cannot know everything and we cannot understand even half what we know! I have given up wanting to understand. As far as I can, I am content with believing all that I see in God’s Word. People say, “But you contradict yourself.” I dare say I do, but I never contradict God to my knowledge, or the Bible. If I do, may my Lord forgive me. Do not believe me for a minute if I speak contrary to God’s Word in order to appear consistent. The sin of being inconsistent with my poor fallible self does not trouble me a tenth as much as the dread of being inconsistent with what I find in God’s Word!

Some want to shape the Scriptures to their creed or denomination and they get a very nice square creed, too, and trim the Bible most dexterously—it is wonderful how they do it! But I would rather have a crooked creed and a straight Bible, than I would try to twist the Bible round to suit what I believe. “Neither do I exercise myself,” says the Psalmist, “with things too high for me,” and I think we do well to keep very much in that line. “Oh, but really, one ought to be acquainted with all the phrases of modern thought.” Yes, and how many hours in a day ought a man give to that kind of thing? Twenty-five out of the 24 would hardly be sufficient, for the phrases of modern thought are innumerable—and every fool who sets himself up as a philosopher sets up a new scheme! Am I to spend my time in going about to knock his card-houses over?

Not I! I have something else to do! And so has every Christian minister. He has real doubts to deal with which vex true hearts! He has anxieties to relieve in converted souls and in minds that are pining after the Truth of God! He has these to meet without everlastingly tilting at windmills and running all over the country to put down every scarecrow which learned simpletons may set up! We shall soon defile ourselves if we work day after day in the common sewers of skepticism! Brothers and Sisters, there is a certain highway of Truth in which you and I, like wayfaring men and women, feel ourselves safe—let us travel on it!

There are some things that we do know because we have experienced them—some doctrines which nobody can beat out of us because we have tasted them and handled them. Well, if we can go further, well and good. But to my mind, we are foolish to go further and fare worse. If a man has reached the Land’s End and some great genius should tell him to walk on farther than Old England reaches. And if he ridicules him because he will not go a step further into the fog which conceals an awful plunge—I think, upon the whole—he may be content to put up with the ridicule! Put your foot down, Brothers and Sisters, and see whether there is anything under it! Check whether there is a good text or two underneath—whether there is a little personal experience underneath and, if you do not find it, let the advanced thinkers go alone—you had better keep to the Rock.

“Prove all things”—do not run after their novelties till you have proved them. But what you have proved hold fast. Be conservative in God’s Truth, and radical too, by keeping to the root of the matter. Hold fast what you know and live mainly upon the simplicities of the Gospel, for, after all, the food of the soul does not lie in controversial points—it lies in points which we will never have controverted, for “without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh.” There is the food of the soul where there is no controversy in any devout Christian spirit! Exercise yourself, then, in the plainer matters, and do not imbibe the notion that you must read all the quarterlies and master, “The Contemporary Review” and the like, or else you will be a nobody. Be content to be just such a nobody as a weaned child is, and say, “I exercise not myself in great matters or in things too high for me.”

The same evil comes up in another form when we want to know all the reasons of Divine Providence—why this affliction was sent and why that? Why Father died—why those two children that we loved so well were taken from us? Why we do not prosper in our various enterprises? Why? Why?

Why? Ah, when we begin asking, “Why? Why? Why?” what an endless task we have before us! If we become like a weaned child we shall not ask, “why?” but just believe that in our heavenly Father’s dispensations there is a wisdom too deep for us to fathom, a goodness veiled but certain!

We exercise ourselves in things too high for us, too, when we begin considering the results of duty and hesitate to do it. A man’s course is quite clear in the Word of God, but he says, “If I do that, how am I to provide for my family? If I do that, shall I not be throwing out a sphere of usefulness? I know it would be right to do it. My conscience tells me that I ought—but other people manage, somehow, to make notches in their conscience and they are evidently very useful where they are.”

Ah, my dear Brother, pray God to lead you in a plain path, and remember, you have nothing to do with results except to receive them as tests of your faithfulness! Results must always be left with God! If the result of doing right would be that you lost your life, your Master tells you that you must hate even your own life, also, or else you cannot be His disciple. You will get helped if you can trust, but if, for the sake of this or that, you do wrong—I do not mind how you put it—you are doing evil that good may come—and you are grieving the Spirit of God! Your mind will never get to be like a weaned child. It is not the childlike spirit to try to excuse yourself for maintaining a false position. The childlike spirit is to do what our heavenly Father tells us, because He tells us, and leave the consequences with Him.

Thus I have said enough, perhaps too much, about the connection. Now, from the simile itself we gather that the condition of heart of which David spoke was this—that he was like one who was able to give up his natural food, which seemed to him absolutely necessary, and which he greatly enjoyed. The weaned babe has given up what it loved. By nature we hang on the breasts of this world and only Sovereign Grace can wean us from it. But when we give up self-righteousness, self-confidence, the love of the world, the desire of self-aggrandizement—when we give up trusting in man, trusting in ceremonies, trusting in anything but God— then and only then has our soul become like a weaned child! Then it has given up what Nature feeds upon that it may feed upon the Bread of Heaven!

It means, next, that he had at last conquered his desires, his longings. The weaning child has his desires strong upon him and he frets. But the weaned child is content, his desires lie still. And the child of God, when sufficient Grace has come, feels no desires for that which once delighted him. He submits himself so completely to his Father’s will that if he is to do without, he does without. Paul said he had learned in whatever state he was to be content. To be content to be without as well as to be with is a high attainment. Not to have and to be as happy in not having as if one had all he desired is well. O, blessed state to be in! Not merely taken away from the breasts of earth, but taught no longer to wish for them!

Now, a weaned child is entirely dependent upon its mother. It knows nothing about how it is to be fed. It could not feed itself and it must die if deprived of the care of another. But it rests quietly, free from even a trace of anxiety. I find that the Hebrew gives the idea of a child lying in its mother’s bosom, perfectly satisfied. And David puts it something like this, O my Lord, “my soul lies in Your bosom like a child that has done with crying and fretting, and is weaned altogether.” Oh, happy man who so depends upon God that he leaves all his concerns with the God of Love and sings sweetly in confidence in God!

Thus I have tried to describe the state which the Psalmist intended by being “as a weaned child.”  
II. And now, secondly, WHAT IS THE EXCELLENCE OF THIS CONDITION? Why is it desirable to be even as a weaned child? It is excellent in every way. You will know it best by attaining to it, for when you are weaned, your desires will no longer worry you. Curb desire and you have struck at the root of half your sorrow! He smarts not under poverty who has learned to be content. He frets not under affliction who is submissive to the Father’s will and lays aside his own. When your desires are held within bounds, your temptations to rebel are ended.  
You wanted this and you wanted that, and so you quarreled with God and your Lord and you were seldom on good terms. He did not choose to pamper you and you wanted Him to and so you fretted like a weaning child. Now you leave it to His will and you have peace. The strife is over. Your soul is quieted and behaves itself becomingly. Now, also, your resentments against those who injured you are gone. You were angry with a certain person, but your pettishness has ended with your weaning—you see that God sent him to do this which has troubled you and you accept his hard words and cruel actions as from God—and by His Grace, you are angry no more.  
You do not kick and struggle, now, against your condition and position. And you no longer murmur and complain from day to day as if you were harshly dealt with. No, if God chooses to better your circumstances you will be glad. If He does not, you just take it as you find it, for you could not blame His Providence. You give your thoughts to something better than the things of earth, for you now resolve as David did in the 132nd Psalm, which is very remarkable as following the Psalm which contains our text, because there he goes on to declare that he will build for the Lord of Hosts. When your own business is all right and you are weaned from all fretting, worrying and self-seeking, then you are free to undertake the Lord’s business.  
He has done for you what you want and now you want to do something for Him. You have sought the kingdom of God and His Righteousness and all other things have been added to you, so that you are as happy as the days are long in June! Look at the birds in the winter. When there is not a leaf on the trees they sit and sing! And in the early spring, when still the winter’s cold is lingering, they pour out their very choicest songs—and yet there is not a lark or thrush among them that has an hour’s provision in store! Not one among them has house or barn, or gathers anything and yet, according to Martin Luther’s interpretation of their song, they sing— *“Mortal, cease from toil and sorrow,  
God provides for the morrow.”*  
Happy is the man who comes to that condition! God, bring us there!  
When we are weaned we have got rid of the ground of future troubles and disappointments. We do not get weaned all at once from everything. One person, here, has been weaned from confidence in riches, but perhaps his heart, his affectionate heart, is clinging to some human love, some mortal joy. Well, Brother, well, Sister, remember that where your treasure is your heart will go—and if that treasure is taken away, your heart must ache. If we trust in an arm of flesh, we make a rod for our own backs. You never lean upon a man, or woman, either, and steal away from simple trust in God, but what you are preparing for yourself a trial! It may be in the treachery of the one you trusted. It certainly will be, if you live long enough, in the death of that beloved one.  
“Dust to dust” and, “ashes to ashes,” will be the end of all earthly joy. If a building leans upon a buttress, if that buttress is taken away it must be weakened. But if it can stand alone, upon its own foundation, then it stands firmly. The man who depends alone upon his God and whose expectation is from Him, has not half the occasions for trouble that he has who is leaning here and leaning there, and leaning in 50 places! For each earthly prop will be the cause or occasion of distress at some time or other.  
III. I have very much to say on this point, but my time is gone. I will only close with the last inquiry, which is this—IS THIS STATE ATTAINABLE? Certainly. David said, “My soul is even as a weaned child.” He did not say that he hoped it would be. We can surely get where David got, for he was a man of like passions with ourselves. No attainment in Grace is to be viewed as the monopoly of one man or one age! In fact, we have more advantages than the Psalmist, for he lived under a much more povertystricken dispensation than we do.  
Now the gates of Heaven are set wide open and the treasure houses and the granaries of our heavenly Joseph are free to all Israel! And, if we are at all straitened, it certainly cannot be in the Lord! He does not stint us. Did David say, “My soul is even as a weaned child”? Then no Believer here ought to be content till he can say, “By the Grace of God I am brought into that same condition.” This sacred weanedness of heart is possible under

 any circumstances. The poor have often attained it.  
I saw, this week, a poor women entirely dependent upon what was given to her by others. She is confined to her chamber, needing to be lifted from her bed. She is racked with rheumatic pain and yet as happy as an angel! She was joying and rejoicing in the Lord and one of her greatest pleasures was to sit on the side of the bed for an hour, when her pain was not so bad but what she could sit up, and get through a chapter or two of her Bible. Then her heart took to itself wings and soared up to Heaven! Her soul was as a weaned child. She had no anxieties and no fretfulness. Those who attended her said that such a thing as a murmur never escaped her. Hear this, you poor ones!  
And you who are better off may get there in the midst of riches, for David was a king and yet he did not suffer his worldly wealth to canker his spirit. He was as a weaned child though dwelling in a palace! He could get at the breast of worldly pleasures and yet he was weaned from it! A man may be in this condition when he is tossed to and fro and troubled. Business men are apt to say, “It is all very well for you ministers to talk about calm and peace of mind. But if you had to sell flour and bread, or measure out drapery, or look after a lot of clerks, or go into a large factory and see after a pack of work girls, you would find it very difficult.”  
My dear Friends, look at David’s life. How tossed about he was! What cares, what trials, what changes, what singular alternations of condition— and yet for all that his soul was even as a weaned child! Do you think the religion of Jesus Christ was meant to be kept under a glass case and that it would make good people of us if we were locked up in a cloister? No, it is a practical everyday religion meant for you that have factories and you that have bakeries and you that have shops! The religion which cannot stand the wear and tear of everyday life is not worth two pence—and the sooner you are rid of such rubbish, the better! We need a religion which we may take with us wherever we go, that will keep us calm and quiet and self-possessed, because we are possessed of the Spirit of God. May we reach this happy state and never leave it!  
What is the way to get it? The Psalm tells us, “Let Israel hope in the Lord, from now on and forever.” Faith blossoming into hope is the way of sanctification—the road to a calm and quiet spirit. You cannot say to yourself, “I will fret no longer,” and then expect never to fret. No, Brothers and Sisters, you must expel one affection by another—one propensity must be vanquished by another. You are too ready to trust in man—trust in God will push out carnal confidence. You are expecting great things of the world, that is foolish! Expect great things of God and you will cease from carnal hopes. You are seeking, from day to day, for this world’s good. You feel an ambition to rise—seek after the eternal good and feel an ambition to get nearer to God—and the other ambition will die. You are worried by fears and anxieties— come and rest your soul upon the faithful promise and, resting there, your anxieties will cease.  
I fear that many Christian people think that faith has nothing to do with everyday life. They do not expect to find that it relieves them of anxieties as to bread and cheese for themselves, or shoes and socks for the children—and all those little troubles and worries which concern a housewife and a father. But, oh, Beloved, it is not so! The heathen had their household gods and, blessed be God, He is our household God, the God of all the families of Israel! The Lord hears the young ravens when they cry—will He not hear His people? The ravens only cry for meat—a dead rabbit or a pigeon is all they need—yet the Lord sees that their needs are supplied! And I find that, “not a sparrow falls to the ground without your Father, and the very hairs of your head are all numbered.” These poor hairs? These little things! These trifling things! You will never be as a weaned child till you leave these little things with God, for the child has no great things. A child’s matters are all little—though they are great to the babe they are little to us. Leave your little things with God! Leave everything with God! Live in God! Dwell in God! Have no secrets between yourself and God! The troubles of life which fret us most are the little things. If a man goes on a long walk it is not the climbing and it is not the slipping down the steep hillside—it is that nasty little stone which has got into his shoe which troubles him! He can hardly see it, but there it is, and it blisters his foot and lames him.  
Ah, dear Brothers and Sisters, take the little stone to God! Ask Him to remove that little vexation from you, for as with God there is nothing great, so is there nothing little. The greatest philosopher in the world, or the greatest king, if his little child had a thorn in his finger, would not think himself disgraced if he stooped to take it out with a needle. The Lord who makes all things and calls the stars by their names does not dishonor Himself when He binds up our broken hearts. Go, then, to your God and let your soul leave everything with Him by faith, being made as a weaned child. “Easier said than done,” says somebody. Yes, Brethren, except by faith—but to faith it is easy enough.  
And I boldly say here that I have sometimes found it easier to exercise faith than to talk about it. When I trust God—and I hope I do that habitually—I do not find that to give up anxiety and to trust in God is difficult, now, though it used to be. Blessed be my Lord, I cannot help believing Him, for He loads me down with evidences of His Truth and fidelity! Once get really into the swim of faith and you do not need to struggle—the sacred current of Grace will carry you along. Give yourself completely up to the Lord Jesus Christ and the mighty energy of the blessed Spirit—and you will find it sweet to lie passive in His hands and know no will but His!  
God bring you there! If there is any unconverted person here who cannot understand all this, I pray the Lord to make him a child, first, and then make him a weaned child! Regeneration must come first, but sanctification will follow. Believe in Jesus for pardon and then you will have Grace given to resign yourself to the Divine will. May the Lord wean you from earth and wed you to Heaven. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 130, 131.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—708, 778. Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307.  
Sermon #3294 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE LORD’S ETERNAL REST  
NO. 3294

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 21, 1912.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 22, 1886.

**“This is My rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.” Psalm 132:14.**

THESE are the words of Jehovah Himself concerning the hill of Zion, but it is clear that He did not intend us to understand them merely in their literal reference to Zion, because Zion could not be a fitting place for His eternal rest. Nor has He made it literally His rest forever, for Zion has been trodden down of the Gentiles for all these centuries. I have no doubt that the Lord had in His mind the greater Zion, “the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem...the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in Heaven.” The eternal God, looking down from His Throne of Glory upon all the creatures He has made, selects His Church—elect, blood-bought, called, preserved and sanctified, and He says concerning this Church—“This is my rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.”

We would never have ventured to conceive of God as finding rest in such puny creatures as we are. However beloved, and however filled with His Spirit, it would seem too great a thing for the Creator ever to rest in His creature! Yet it is true that this is where He finds His rest. It is concerning the redeemed souls who make up the Church of Christ that He says, “This is my rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.”

I must, at the outset, confess my inability to dive into the depths of this subject. I can only, as it were, flit across its surface as the swallow with swift wings skims over the brook. I am going to ask, first, about God finding rest in His Church. Then about the duration of that rest. And in closing, I want to say a few practical words concerning our finding rest where God finds rest.

I. First, then, let us think of GOD FINDING REST IN HIS CHURCH. He does this, in the first place, because in His Church all the three Divine Persons of the Trinity are honored. A man does not find rest in anything which gratifies only one part of his nature. Therefore it can truly be said to Christians concerning this world, “This is not your rest,” for whatever gratification it may yield to the body, it can never satisfy our soul. If there were in the Church of God honor only for God the Father, but none for God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, it could never be the Lord’s eternal rest. But, Beloved, when the Father looks upon the Church, He views with delight His own chosen children and sees His eternal purposes accomplished in them! He thinks of the Covenant into which He entered with His dear Son on their behalf, and of the Atonement which He gave for them when He gave His only-begotten Son to die as their Substitute and Surety. As for God the Son—when He looks upon the Church, He beholds those for whom He paid the ransom price on Calvary—every member of that Church He has purchased with His own blood and, therefore, He looks upon them with peculiar complacency. As for God the Holy Spirit, He—  
“**Takes delight to view  
The holy souls He formed anew.”**  
As He gazes upon them, He sees the gracious results of His regenerating energy and He rests in holy contemplation. I hope, Beloved, you will never exalt one member of the ever-blessed Trinity above either of the rest— it is quite a mistake to ascribe the work of salvation entirely to the Father, or to the Son, or to the Holy Spirit. In the first Creation, it is most emphatically true that God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness.” The first Creation was the work of Deity as a whole, and so is the new Creation! And for both we may most justly sing—

*“Praise Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.”*  
All are equally concerned in perfecting the Church, the true Zion, and therefore God, in the Trinity in Unity—Father, Son, and Spirit—says concerning the Church, “This is My rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.”—  
*“Arise, O King of Grace, arise,  
And enter to Your rest!  
Lo, Your Church waits with longing eyes, Thus to be owned and blest.  
Enter with all Your glorious train,  
Your Spirit and your Word—  
All that the Ark did once contain  
Could no such Grace afford.”*  
Just think for a minute or two what this rest of God is. Is it the entire cessation from toil? When we do nothing, but sit still in listless inactivity, that cessation from toil may yield us a measure of rest, but it is not rest of a kind that we could long love—certainly it is not such rest as we should wish to enjoy forever! We would be in a most restless state if we had nothing to do! We would soon be worn out with the weariness of living an aimless, purposeless life. I believe the truest state of rest is when a man has just as much to do as he can perform with ease. If your mind does not think at all, it is in a coma or in a sort of fainting fit. But when it is occupied with pleasing themes, not working out difficult problems, but meditating upon simple themes which you can easily understand, then it is at rest! Perhaps you sit down quietly by the fire and indulge in what we call day-dreams—your mind is active all the while, yet its activity does not prevent it from resting. Heaven is a place and state of perfect rest, yet it is not the rest of silence and stagnation! In one sense, they rest not day nor night, yet they serve God continually—and that is perfect rest!  
It is in His Church that God finds His rest, for it is there that He finds work exactly adapted to His infinite capacities. The blessedness of God must consist partly in His activity—what an active Being God is! There is not a cloud that flies across the sky of which He is not the pilot. How busily He worked in creating the heavens and the earth and all that they contain, yet He never rested in them for the visible creation is too narrow a couch to provide a resting place for the Eternal! But when He comes to the mightier work of Redemption and reveals the combined Majesty of His Justice and sublimity of His love in those whom He forms anew, then He is engaged in a task that occupies those attributes which He most delights to exercise! And therefore He says to His Church, “This is My rest forever: here will I dwell.” When He made the earth, “the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” But you never read that God sang at the Creation. It is when He is working in the higher sphere that He says to Zion, the Church of His choice, “The Lord your God in the midst of you is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over you with joy; He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing.” In the new Creation He finds such rest as the old Creation never could afford Him. We know so little of the Infinite God that we must speak with due humility and reticence concerning these great mysteries, yet it seems to me that in the making of those who shall show forth His praise forever, He is doing a work in which He especially delights and in which He, therefore, rests and rejoices as He does in nothing else!  
Further, He rests in His Church because He sees, there, His eternal purposes fulfilled. Whenever a soul is saved, God sees, there, another of His Divine decrees accomplished. And that affords His heart rest—to speak after the manner of men—and we cannot speak in any other way. As, one by one, those who were chosen by Him unto eternal life, those whom He gave in Covenant to His Son, those who were redeemed by that Son’s precious blood are delivered from the Egyptian bondage of sin, conducted safely through the howling wilderness waste of this world and carried across the Jordan of death into the Canaan of heavenly rest, God sees His eternal purposes fulfilled and therein He finds most blessed rest! When the entire Church of God shall have been brought, safe and perfected, to His right hand in Glory, then will He say, in the words of our text, “This is My rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.” I must confess that I do not understand the condition of mind of those brethren who are not able to perceive in the Scriptures a clear Revelation concerning the purposes of God in the salvation of His elect. It would be strange if the work of Grace were left to chance. An architect would not permit an important building like St. Paul’s, for instance, to be erected according to the whims and fancies of the individual workers employed! He would not leave to the freewill of every laborer the decision as to where each pillar should be placed, or what stone and other materials should be used in the building—he has everything done according to the plan that he designed before the work was commenced! And shall not the Most High, who is building a habitation for Himself, have it erected in harmony with the plan that He had prepared from all eternity? I think, Brothers and Sisters, it is because God has planned what His Church is to be and because that plan will be exactly followed until the whole building is complete, that the Lord says concerning it, “This is My rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.”  
Then, in the next place, have we not in the Church of God almighty energies rewarded? God rested on the seventh day because Creation’s work was done. And God rests in His Church in so far as it also is a finished work. Every soul saved by Grace, every soul brought home to Glory is the result and the reward of almighty labor. He who spoke and it was done in the making of the material world made not His Church so easily. It was with His word that He made this world, but it was the Incarnate Word that was necessary to the new creation! No blood needed to be spilt for the making of this earth in all its pristine beauty and glory, but the new heavens and the new earth could be cemented by nothing less than the product of almighty suffering! The Church of God is a most wonderful fabric upon which not only have the purposes of God been exercised from all eternity, but “all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” has been at work to accomplish this marvel of marvels which shall set all Heaven ablaze with astonishment when it is at last complete and perfect! For many centuries stroke upon stroke from God’s hand and instruments has been telling upon the rough block of marble, and when the last touch shall have been given to it, and the work appears in all its Glory and beauty before the eyes of God, He will rest, just as a skilled workman does in the successful accomplishment of some great task which he has undertaken and which he regards as his masterpiece.  
Best of all, however, is the next reason why God rests in His Church! That is because it is the reward of stupendous suffering. We are told that “the Lord smelled a sweet savor” when Noah offered burnt offerings after he came out of the ark. The marginal reading is “a savor of rest.” And when God is dealing with sinners, now, He finds no savor of rest except in the Sacrifice of His dear Son! All the world over the spirit of Justice flew in search of a righteous man, but the only result of that long search was the verdict, “There is none righteous, no, not one.” Justice next looked to see if there was any helper who could deliver the guilty, but none could be found until she turned her eyes to the Cross where hung the Son of God in extreme agonies. And as she marked the falling blood, the bowed head and the crown of thorns—and heard the Voice that said, “It is finished,” she rested! Her long quest was over, for she had found the One who was Himself perfectly righteous and who was, therefore, able to deliver the guilty by the full and complete Atonement that He offered for their Redemption. The Son of God takes delight in His Church because He sees that in her, all His pains and agonies have yielded to Him a glorious harvest! And God the Father, who smote His Son so heavily when He took the place of His sinful people, delights in His Church because He sees in her a full reward for all that His well-beloved Son endured.  
Then do you not think that God finds rest in His Church because of the relationships there developed? Where do you find rest, dear Friends? You not only rest in the garden which you have planted, and in the house which you have with a great effort, bought—but your choicest rest is found with the children whom you so fondly love. There is no stranger in the family circle! The door is closed, the fire is burning brightly and now is mother’s time for rest, and father’s time for joy, for there are only loved ones around the hearth. The merchant comes home from the counting-house where he has been on the watch all day lest he should be deceived and over-reached. But he can come down from his watchtower, now, for he has no fear of being deceived in the family circle. The judge has been sternly administering the law while he has been upon the bench, but He lays aside all his sternness when he takes off his robes of office and gathers his children around him. The toiling laborer wipes the sweat from his brow and gladly rests at home among those whom he loves. “Perfect love casts out fear,” and fear is like a thorn in our nest—it prevents us from resting. But when “perfect love” comes, then we are perfectly at our ease. When you are at home, you may say what you will, and do what you please—there are none to slander and align you there. You do not say all you feel in the presence of your servants—they are faithful and true, but you do not tell them all that is in your heart. It is when you are among your children that you feel free and unrestrained. So it is with God! Not even among the angels does God find His rest— bright and perfect beings though they are, they are but ministering spirits waiting in the great Temple of God to render service to the saints! But here, where He sees His own likeness in every blood-bought soul. Here where He sees those whom He has begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead—here it is that He feels at home and finds His rest! Do not think that I am speaking too boldly when I use the family metaphor to illustrate this great Truth of God, for I am but following the example of our Lord Jesus, Himself, when He said, “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?” He rejoices over the son who was dead, and is alive again—who was lost, and is found—and because He is our Father, and we are His children, He says of us and of the whole company of His redeemed, “This is My rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.”

II. Now I am to speak briefly concerning THE DURATION OF GOD’S REST IN HIS CHURCH. “This is My rest forever.”

Then this proves that there will always be a Church of God. There are certain persons who are constantly subject to great fear and their fears make them quiver and shake—and then they imagine that God’s Church is quivering and shaking, which is a very different matter! They hold up their hands, and cry, “Alas! Alas! The Church is in danger!” Well, some particular church, designed by men, may be in danger, but I do not believe that the Church of God is, or ever was, or ever will be in danger! It is thought by some that Popery will swallow the Church of Christ just as the whale swallowed Jonah. But if it should do so, the Church would come back again as surely as Jonah was cast up upon the dry land! There is no sword fashioned that can smite the Church of God, nor will there ever be one! There will be a Church as long as there is a world— and when this world is burned up, the Church shall shine more brightly than ever—and it shall keep on shining to all eternity, and be a rest for God forever—

*“Glorious things of you are spoken,  
Zion, city of our God!  
He whose word cannot be broken,  
Formed you for His own abode:  
On the Rock of Ages founded,  
What can shake your sure repose?  
With salvation’s walls surrounded,  
You may smile at all your foes.”*

Further, there will always be a Church with God in it, and such a Church as God can rest in. Some people think that there is no church of which they can comfortably be members. But, dear Friends, there is a Church of which Jesus Christ is a member, for He is the Head of it! And if you cannot be members of any visible church, be not content unless you are members of that Church in which God rests forever, for that is always a pure Church! You sometimes hear a great deal about Apostolic succession—it is a gross lie as it is generally understood, but in itself it is a great Truth of God. The Apostolic succession may be very clearly traced through the Novatians, Donatists, Lollards, Albigenses, Waldenses, Anabaptists and Huguenots, right down to the Christians of various denominations that exist today. There is a true line that never entered the Stygian bog of Rome! A pure silver stream which has flowed down to us right from the times of the Apostles! There always has been a Church in which God could dwell and there always will be a Church that shall be His dwelling place! You know that Christ prayed, “Holy Father, keep through Your own name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one, as We are.” And I do not believe that Christ prayed any prayer that will not be answered in due time! More than that, I believe that the Church of Christ is one now. “Oh, but!” says someone, “look at the many divisions and denominations that there are!” Yes, I know about them, but the only true unity is that of the spiritually quickened souls that form the Mystical Body of Christ. Whatever division there may be among them at present is only external—if we could see beneath the surface and judge as God judges—we should perceive that in the truly vital matters, they are one. Being one with Christ, they are also one with each other. We must look less and less to mere externals, and think more and more of that which is spiritual, for it is only in the invisible and spiritual Church of Christ that God finds rest. I do not believe that He finds rest in the Baptist denomination, or in the Independent, or in the Church of England, as such—He finds His rest in all the saved to whatever denomination they may belong! His rest is not in great human organizations, but in those whom His Grace has called—who are already one in Christ Jesus!

Another inference that I draw from the text is that the Church of God will always be secure. “Here will I dwell,” says the Lord. And there would be no rest for Him if the enemy could be continually scaling the ramparts, damaging the walls and carrying away His people as captives. A king within his capital could not rest if one suburb after another fell into the hands of his foes. The rest of a shepherd would be effectually broken if he heard a lion scrunching the bones of any of his sheep, or if a wolf seized even one of the lambs of his flock. When the Lord says, “This is My rest forever,” He seems to me to guarantee the eternal security of every soul that is in the true Church of Christ. All who are in the Church which Jesus bought with His precious blood must be perfectly safe forever—

*“The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose, He will not, He will not desert to His foes! That soul, though all Hell should endeavor to shake, He’ll never, no never, no never forsake!”*

There may be many in any part of the visible church who will perish, but there shall never be one who is truly a member of the Church of the living God who shall be lost! I started a little, the other night, when a Brother said that once we are brought into the Church, we are safe forever. But when he went on to show that by the expression, “the Church,” he meant what God means by those words, I fully agreed with him! This is the Zion of which Jehovah says, “This is My rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.” And it is His rest because He knows that all who are within it are safe forever! At the last, Jesus will be able to say to His Father, “Of all whom You gave Me have I lost none.”

I also infer from the text that the whole Church will be eternally glorified, otherwise God could not say of it, “This is My rest forever.” The living stones that are to form the “habitation of God through the Spirit,” are being quarried, fashioned and polished here below—and one by one they are being transported to the holy hill above. And so, “all the building fitly framed together grows unto a holy temple in the Lord.” And when it is complete, He will say, “Here will I dwell forever.” The eternal duration of the Church’s blessedness ought to be a theme of greater consideration and rejoicing than it is. Think of it, Beloved, that the great God will forever find His rest in you and in others like you who have been redeemed by the precious blood of His dear Son! Does not this make time seem a mere trifle, and earth but a tiny speck scarcely worthy of our notice? Then, as you are forever and ever to be the object of Divine delight, cannot you see that you must always have been so? Oh, revel in this thought, that every blood-bought soul shall eternally be the temple and abode of God, Himself, and that all of them united in one shall be His rest forever!

III. Now we are to close with a few practical words concerning OUR FINDING REST WHERE GOD FINDS REST.  
God finds His rest in His Church. Is that where we find our rest? I wonder how many here could truly repeat the language of Dr. Watts— *“Let others choose the sons of mirth  
To give a relish to their wine.  
I love the men of heavenly birth,  
Whose thoughts and language are Divine.*Do you, dear Friends find rest in the company of God’s chosen people? The ungodly do not. If some gracious person should go to their house and begin talking about the mysteries of the Cross, their impatient glances at the clock would soon show that such a theme was a weariness to them. When they go up to the place where God’s people meet, to worship Him, the shorter the service is the better they like it! And the reason is that they do not savingly know the Lord. A man without sight would not be likely to be very much charmed in a picture gallery. And a man who was stone-deaf would not be very delighted with the grandest oratorio that was ever performed! In like manner, we cannot expect that those who have no spiritual sense can find delight in the company of God’s people. But how different it is with the man who is really saved! He can say, with David, of the saints that are in the earth, that they are “the excellent, in whom is all my delight.” A good old saint, whom I went to see on her dying bed, said to me, “It always gives me comfort, Sir, to think that God is not likely to send me to dwell with the wicked, for I never liked their society here. I believe He will let me go with my own company and I have always kept company with His people since I have learned to know Him.” I assured her that I believed it would be so. It is a sign of Grace when we find rest with those who are really spiritual because they are spiritual. You may love some saints of God, yet it may be no sign of Grace on your part—there may be something specially lovable about them so that you cannot help loving them or you may have received some temporal kindness from them and, therefore, love them for purely natural reasons. But it is a very different matter when we can say, with John—“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” Some of us can truthfully declare that our happiest hours are those that we expound with the saints of God! And we can fully sympathize with Dr. Watts when he says—  
*“My soul shall pray for Zion still,  
While life or breath remains;  
There my best Friends, my kindred dwell, There God my Savior reigns.*

God says of His Church, “This is My rest forever,” and we can say the same. I cannot say that concerning any visible church—I should not like to have to rest forever in any portion of the church on earth! But in union with the redeemed in Glory, I can rest! When I think of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. When I read the lives of Prophets and Apostles. When I turn to more modern times and think of Calvin, and Luther, and Zwingli, and Berridge, and Wesley, and Whitefield, and a host of others, I can say, “Ah, let me once get into their company and then I shall feel, ‘This is my rest forever.’ I do not need anything more than this except to be in the Master’s own company!” Oh, what rest it will be to be with Him! This is our rest even now—to be with Him! And to be forever with Him will be the perfection of rest—

*“Let me be with You, where You are,  
My Savior, my eternal rest!  
Then only will this longing heart  
Be fully and forever blest.”*

Do you not think that Abel must have felt very strange when he went to Heaven? How startled the angels must have been when they saw the first soul redeemed by blood in Glory all by himself! I think they must have hushed their songs awhile to ask all about him. Here was a man come to sing in Heaven, to chant before the Eternal Throne the praises of a Sacrifice greater than any that he had offered! Yes, but Abel could not have felt perfectly at rest, for Paul tells us that the Church in Heaven will not be made perfect without us. When another and yet another joined Abel in Heaven, I think it must have increased his happiness. And now, as others keep on going Home, the glorified saints welcome them with exceeding joy, for they all feel that their bliss will not be perfect until every redeemed soul is gathered there with them and the whole of the shining ranks are filled! Then, when all shall be there, each one of them will say, as God Himself now says, “This is my rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.”

I wonder if there are any here who will never find rest in the Church of the First-Born which are written in Heaven? If you want to get into the Church of God, do you know the way to get in? You say, “I must come before the Elders.” No, no—that is the way to get into our Church, here, but not into the invisible Church above! “Well, then, I must be baptized.” No, that is the ordinance for you after you have entered the Church of God. “Well, then, how am I to get in?” He whose hand was pierced says, I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.” The only door to the Church of God is Jesus Christ! Trust to His precious blood sprinkled upon the altar to give you access to and acceptance with God—and having that blood sprinkled upon yourself, you may venture to draw near even to the Eternal, for you shall be “accepted in the Beloved.” God grant that it may be so, for Jesus sake! Amen.

[See Sermon #3287, Volume 58—THE ONLY DOOR—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.]  
EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 132.  
A Song of Degrees.**

1. LORD, remember David, and all his afflictions. God had entered into an Everlasting Covenant with David, “ordered in all things and sure,” and in this Psalm either David, himself, or some of his people or descendants pleaded that Covenant in time of affliction and trial. “Lord, remember David, and all his afflictions.” The Lord would not forget either David or his people, yet it pleased Him for them to come before Him in prayer and to remind Him of the Covenant that He had made with His servant. Using this prayer in a Gospel sense, we bow before the Lord and cry, “Lord, remember Jesus, the Son of David, and all His afflictions! Remember all that He endured as His people’s Substitute, and have pity upon us for His sake, as we plead that Eternal Covenant which You have made with Him on our behalf.” That ancient Covenant was made with David and the far more ancient Covenant of Grace was made with great David’s greater Son,” our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

2-5. How he swore unto the LORD, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob; surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor up into my bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes, or slumber to my eyelids, until I find out a place for the LORD, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob. David remembered that he had built himself a palace, but he wished even more ardently to build a palace for his God—a house for the celebration of His worship—“an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.” But where can a worthy house be built for God? Where can there be made a fit dwelling place for the Most High? He fills all things, yet all things cannot contain Him! There is but one dwelling place of God—it is in Christ Jesus, for “in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” Oh, how we ought to thank God that He has provided Himself a fitting dwelling place in the Person of His dear Son, in whom all Believers are also built together for a habitation of God through the Holy Spirit! As for the Ark of the Covenant, it had long ago in David’s day dwelt in obscurity.

6. Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the woods.  
[See Sermon #2590, Volume 44—HEARING, SEEKING, FINDING—Read/download the entire sermon,

free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] God is willing to dwell in the woods. Many a time He does so. In many a cottage far removed from the haunts of men, God is found—and to many a backwoodsman God is as near as He is to those who worship Him in temples or cathedrals. “We found it in the fields of the woods.”

7. We will go into His tabernacles: we will worship at His footstool. This Psalm is called “A Song of degrees.” Notice the steps here described. We heard of it, we found it, we will go into it, we will worship in it! It is a good thing when in our prayers and praises, we ascend step by step—not on the steppingstones of our dead selves which are pieces of rubbish— but by the living steppingstones upon which the ever-living Spirit helps us to rise tier above tier, His own almighty hand helping us continually to rise higher and higher!

8. Arise, O LORD into Your rest; You and the ark of Your strength. Let us pray that the Lord may constantly find rest in the midst of His people. He finds rest in them because they are one with His well-beloved Son. Come, Lord, at this moment, and take Your rest in the midst of this assembly and make us all rest in You!

9. And let Your priests be clothed with righteousness. This is the best robe for all God’s holy ones who are priests and kings unto Him. This is better than snow white linen or robes decked with crimson and gold!

9. And let Your saints shout for joy. The worship of God should be very gladsome and even demonstrative. We may shout. Sometimes the overflowing of joy demands more than ordinary expression, therefore we pray, “Let Your holy ones shout for joy.”

10. For Your servant David’s sake turn not away the face of Your Anointed. Much more may we ask this for our Lord Jesus Christ’s sake. O God, remember Your Son, our Lord and our King, and for His sake look in love and pity upon us today,

11, 12. The LORD has sworn in truth unto David, He will not turn from it. I will set upon the throne the fruit of your body. If your children will keep My covenant and My testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon your throne forevermore. Long did the house of David reign over Israel. But they proved unfaithful, and therefore the scepter passed out of their hands. But it is still in the hand of another Son of David. In a spiritual sense Jesus Christ has a throne and a dominion that shall know no end—

*“Jesus shall reign wherever the sun  
Does its successive journeys run;  
His kingdom stretches from shore to shore, Till moons shall wax and wane no more.”*

13. For the LORD has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation. The literal Zion was the Lord’s habitation for a time, but the spiritual Zion will be His dwelling place throughout eternity!

14. This is My rest forever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it. God rest in His people. The whole company of the redeemed shall be His abiding place forever!

15. I will abundantly bless her provision: will satisfy her poor with bread. God sends the necessary provision for His people, and sends His blessing with it. We are so poor that we have not even spiritual bread for our souls to eat unless He gives it to us. But here is His gracious promise, “I will satisfy her poor with bread.” This He will do both literally and spiritually.

16. I will also clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy. In the 9th verse we had a silver prayer, but here, in this 16th verse, we have a golden answer. The prayer of the Psalmist was, “Let your saints shout for joy.” The Lord’s answer is, “Her saints shall shout aloud for joy.” God always gives good measure, pressed down, and running over. Often we have not because we ask not, or because we ask amiss. His command to each one of us is, “Open your mouth wide.” And His promise is, “I will fill it.” If you ask great things of Him, He will give you yet greater things for He is “able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.”

17. There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for My Anointed. Oh, that today the horn of David might again bud! May every Believer in Jesus feel the life of God reviving within Him, and in many a case where there is no spiritual life at all, may life Divine begin today! Pray for it, Beloved—and then look for it, and you shall surely see it!

18. His enemies will I clothe with shame: but upon Himself shall His crown flourish. We have no King but Jesus and His crown is always flourishing. It sits well upon a blessed head. Let us crown Him once again this day with our gladsome praise and thanksgiving!

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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GOD’S KING MAGNIFIED  
NO. 3333

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 19, 1912.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 2, 1866.

**“His enemies will I clothe with shame:  
but upon Himself shall His crown flourish.”  
Psalm 132:18.**

THE Lord Jesus Christ communicates much to men with whom He comes in contact and has a mighty influence upon them. He is blessed and He is made a blessing. To those who love Him, Jesus Christ becomes a savor of life unto life. To those who are rebellious and continue to despise Him, He becomes a savor of death unto death. Our Savior, then, has an influence upon all those with whom He comes in contact and association. If I compare His Human Nature with clay, I must compare it with the scented clay which yields a perfume on all sides. You cannot hear of Jesus Christ without either getting a blessing or involving the responsibility of rejecting a blessing. I repeat it—He becomes a blessing to all those who are round about Him, or else, if that blessing is not received, it brings guilt upon the souls of those who reject Him. He is either the stone on which we build our hope and our trust, or else He becomes a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to those who stumble at His Word, being disobedient.

You see the text teaches very definitely this Truth of God, for it not only speaks of Christ, Himself, but of what will become of those who are His enemies. No doubt we may also very properly draw from the text what shall become of His friends, for that same hand which is sure to clothe His enemies with confusion, will be certain yet to clothe His friends with honor and with glory. He who uses the left hand so powerfully to smite His foes, uses His right hand with equal force to bless His friends.

The text, therefore, divides itself very easily and naturally into the two great declarations. We see the clothing of the enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ with shame, but then, again, the crowning of the Lord with a flourishing diadem of eternal Glory. Let us look, then, at—

I. THE ENEMIES OF CHRIST WHOM GOD SAYS HE WILL CLOTHE WITH SHAME.  
Who are these enemies of Christ? In the days of His flesh, you could very easily have discovered them. Some slandered Him, calling Him friend of sinners, gluttonous and a wine-bibber, having a devil and even being a blasphemer. Some took up stones to kill Him. Some cried, “Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” And others bribed the multitude that they might thus hound Him to His shameful and cruel death. Enemies He had on all sides! But there are many who think today that had they lived in that age they would have been numbered with His friends. If it is so, is it not strange that they are not among His friends now? If they would have behaved so well 1800 years ago, it is amazing they should behave so badly now. Our belief is—and the common actions of mankind justify it—that had the sinners of this present day who pretend to have so much affection for the Person of Christ, lived in that age, they, too, alas, would have helped to crucify the Lord of Life and Glory, for they do, in effect, crucify Him now!  
Who are His enemies, then, today? We will not think about those Scribes and Pharisees, and so on, who are all dead and gone, but let us ask who are His enemies NOW? Of course, everybody says that open sinners are the enemies of Christ. Do they not, by their actions, say, “we will not have this Man to reign over us?” His Book they will not read. His day of rest they do not care to keep. To the messages of His ministers they will not listen. His word, “Believe and live,” they cast behind their backs—and having done this, they destroy their own souls and do everything that must grieve His Holy Spirit. Are there any such here, now— lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God—some who would even use the word of blasphemy and indulge in the sins of the flesh? We are not harsh if we put you down among the enemies of Christ! You are evidently not with Him and He, Himself, has said, “He that is not with Me is against Me.” You are not on the Lord’s side—there can be no “betweenites”—you are on the side of His enemies! He Himself declares that it must be so. “If God is God,” said Elijah, “serve Him, but if Baal is God, serve him.” You do in effect say, “The world is my god—myself, my own soul, my own pleasures, my own opinions—these are my gods! As for Jehovah and His Christ, I know nothing concerning Them.” Well, you must be put among His enemies and I would ask you, then, just to take this text and taste the bitterness of it. And I pray that may save you from knowing its bitterness in another world! “His enemies will I clothe with shame.”  
But Christ has other enemies, namely, those who are outwardly moral and excellent in conversation and conduct, but who deny the Lord Jesus Christ. There are some very excellent people in all other respects who doubt His Deity, or say they do—who will even say hard things of Him as the Son of God. They say they much revere His Character as a Man, and conceive Him to be, in fact, a very model of what manhood should be, but they will not accept Him in His true Character as the anointed Son of God and the Savior of the world! Now, the Lord Jesus Christ will most certainly consider such to be His enemies. It is no use for a man to say concerning a monarch, “I have a great respect for the monarch in his private character. I would not do anything to injure him—I would even hold him up to respect in his private character—but as a king I will never yield him loyal homage, I will never obey him. Indeed, I will do all I can to pluck the crown from off his head.” Could the king do otherwise than reckon such a person to be his enemy? It would be in vain for the man to say, “I am privately your friend.” The king would say, “Oh, but I esteem my crown to be as precious as my life.” So the Lord Jesus Christ cannot have the crown-rights of His true Deity touched. He “counts it not robbery to be equal with God,” and He is called, “God Over All, Blessed Forevermore.” He who trod the waves of Galilee’s Lake, whose voice Death heard and gave up its prey—He who opened the gates of Paradise to the dying robber—claims to be none other than equal with the Eternal Father, and like He, “God Over All.” And it is in vain for you to say you respect His Character as a Man, if you do not accept Him in His Deity and accept Him in His official Character as the Savior of sinners! You cannot be otherwise than numbered among His enemies! Well, now, if this should seem to be uncharitable, let me say that I cannot help telling you what I solemnly believe to be the truth and I must, therefore, my Friend, leave with you this text, “His enemies will I clothe with shame.”  
But again, there are other persons who are sound enough in their doctrinal views concerning Christ and who are excellent in their moral character, too, but who are trusting in themselves that they are righteous. You will, perhaps, be startled when I class you among the enemies of Christ! My dear Friend, Christ is the King of Grace. He is in this world to vindicate the plan of salvation by Grace. You, you see, instead of accepting this plan of salvation by Grace, set up the opposite principle of salvation by merit. Merit is anti-Christ! The very essence of Popery, that which is so hateful in it to us and, we believe, so obnoxious to the Lord, is not so much its outward rites and ceremonies as its inward spirit of setting up human merit! There are two merits—your own merit and the merit of Christ. If you trust your own merit, you do in fact proclaim that you are opposed to Christ’s way of saving by His merits! Christ claims to be the Author and Finisher of our faith, the Alpha and the Omega, but if you come in and say, “No, I will do this myself—my moral character, my private devotions, my outward attendance at the House of God will serve me in good place as a righteousness,” you touch Christ in His most tender point, for He claims among all His Glories this first and chief, that He is the Savior of sinners—and if you say that you can do without Him and if you profess to be your own savior—you shall most certainly, however excellent your life may be, be numbered with His enemies! Oh, it will be a sad case for you respectable people, you good, excellent people, when this text shall be fulfilled in you, “His enemies will I clothe with shame.”  
There is one other class I would gladly speak to—and I think they are the worst of all—those who acknowledge that salvation is by Grace and profess to be saved by the blood and righteousness of Christ, who unite themselves with Christ’s Church, but whose lives are so unhallowed as to dishonor Him. You know how the Apostle, half-choked with his sobs as he speaks, says as he gazes upon such, “There are some of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even with weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ.” What a terribly sad reflection! A member of a Christian Church and yet an enemy of the Cross of Christ? I can suggest no better question for each and all of us than this, “Lord is it, I? Lord, is it I?” Why may it not be you? The preacher may ask himself why may it not be he? But whoever it may be among us, this is certain—our Church standing will, so far from excusing us, only increase our guilt— and so it shall be tragically and sadly true, “His enemies will I clothe with shame.” They may clothe themselves with the garments of an outward profession and make broad their phylacteries, but they shall one day be stripped and their hypocrisy shall be discovered! “His enemies will I clothe with shame.”  
Having thus given you, then, a brief list of who are Christ’s enemies and being anxious that you should ask yourselves, my dear Hearers, whether you are among them, I want now to call your attention to the particular phraseology of the text in order to make out what is meant by this being clothed with shame. Do you see it? Shame! Nothing makes a man feel so cowardly and so mean as shame. There have been persons who would sooner die than be put to shame. Many a man would have been able to burn at the stake who has not been able to face public shame. It is a thing which cuts man’s nature to the very quick! Now, if you and I have done anything that makes us ashamed, do you know what we do? Why, we put our shame into the hollow of our hand and we keep it there. We do not tell our wife, our children, our neighbors—and if we can, we go and hide our shame and put it away! Now God seems to say to you and to me, “You have been hiding that shame of yours. You have been wearing the garb of an outward righteousness. Come here! You must put this shame on.” “No, Lord,” you say, “but I want to hide it.” “No,” He says, “you shall put it where it must be seen—where nobody shall be able to see you without seeing it! I will clothe you with it—it shall be all over you. You shall put it on as your outward array. You shall be wrapped in it—you shall sleep in it, awake in it and walk abroad in it— you shall be clothed with shame!” And it strikes me that the text may also bear this meaning—that when God comes to fulfill this threat, shame will be the sinner’s only garment. He had the garment of a profession once—that is to be torn sharply from him and he is to be arrayed only with his scarlet, blushing shame! Once his filthy rags, bad as they were in the sight of God, gave him a sort of covering, but now they shall all be stripped from him and he will have nothing remaining but his shame. Shame shall be his garb from head to foot, nothing but shame in which to wrap himself! When shame only comes into the cheek, it turns it crimson, but here the man or woman shall be shame all over and this shame shall be conspicuous to all onlookers, for he or she shall be clothed with it as with a robe, from head to foot! This seems to be the unmistakable meaning of the text. Now, when does this come true? And how is it true that God’s enemies are clothed with shame?

Well, in the first place, this threat is sometimes very graciously turned into a promise. I cannot wish for some of you a better wish than that you may, in the first sense in which I am going to explain it, be clothed with shame, for when the Lord comes to a soul and says to it with a voice of love, “You have been My enemy, but I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you,” then the soul is covered with shame. It cries out, “How could I be an enemy to so dear and true a Friend?” I recollect one being converted to God by reading the hymn—  
*“Jesus, lover of my soul.”*  
“Oh,” said the man, “is He the lover of my soul? Then how is it that I have been an enemy to Him? Did He love me when on the tree of shame and death? Did He love me so as to pour out His heart’s blood to redeem me? How can I have lived without honoring Him?” And the man was clothed with shame! Some of us have felt what it is to be thus clothed, so that when we went into the House of God we felt almost ashamed to sit with God’s people. They did not know anything about what we were feeling, but we thought they did. And when we went to pray, we felt ashamed to pray, as though our sins would hide God from us and we could not expect to obtain a blessing. We were so clothed with shame that we could not get it away from our eyes! Our whole soul seemed covered with it. No pride, no self-righteousness was left. We could not say, “Lord, I thank You I am not as other men,” but we began to cry, “God be merciful to me, a sinner!” Oh, it is a mercy when, in a gracious sense, the soul is thus covered with shame—a hallowed shame on account of its many sins! I would pray that this terrible text may be fulfilled in the sweetest possible manner by your being covered with shame for sin!  
But alas, dear Friends, it bears on its front a very much more terrible meaning than this. There are some persons who are clothed with shame in this world through disappointment. There are some who think they should put an end to Christianity. They get a notion into their heads, for instance, that if the wife is converted, they will break her of it, or if a child shows some signs of Divine Grace, the man says, “I will laugh it out of him.” Or perhaps they do it on a large scale. Like Voltaire, they boast that within another 20 years there will not be a Christian to be found anywhere. They say that the thing is absurd and is dying out. It is very strange that the very press with which Voltaire printed his works is now used in Geneva to print the Bible—and that while Voltaire, himself, is only remembered to be despised, Christianity seems never to have been so strong as it is at the present day! If all those men who have risen up, one after the other, to injure Christ’s Kingdom, could just now be called back to life and see what has happened, they would look at their predictions and be clothed with shame to see how mistaken they have all been! Their theories have been exploded. They had their little day and have died out and are generally utterly forgotten. And so will all theories that oppose Christ today die out—and their systems of denial will be all clothed with shame!  
In the case of those persecutors who have tried to drive religion out of individuals, they have always been disappointed. They have not succeeded, for the poor, trampled down one has borne it all with supernatural patience and triumphed by endurance—for the Grace of God is not to be expelled from the heart! You know what stout old Martin Luther said. He declared that Grace was like leaven—you put it into the meal and then you may boil it or bake it, fry it or freeze it—but you can never get out the leaven! Once the meal is leavened, nothing can unleaven it. And so is it with the Grace of God! You may do what you will with the man who possesses it. Put him into a mortar and pound him with a pestle until there are not two atoms of him left together—and yet the immortal spirit leaving the anatomy and all its weaknesses behind it, would but the more clearly lay hold on Christ and more fully rejoice in Him! And so, when the disappointment which this brings, comes upon them, then Christ’s enemies are clothed with shame!  
Sometimes, again, in this world the enemies of Christ are clothed with the shame of remorse. Look at Judas Iscariot when he took the pieces of money and threw them down in the treasury and went out and hanged himself. There was the covering of shame. And there have been such men since, who, in life and in death, have been clothed with shame because they have apostatized from the faith and, after making a profession, have, Demas-like, turned back again to the world! It is a blessed thing if that shame leads them to true repentance, but in many cases it is only a repentance that comes from a fear of punishment and is not the work of the Grace of God! Oh, how many have gone down to Hell with its fire burning in their hearts before they got there, feeling the guilt of sin upon them even before God began to handle them, having a foretaste of the flames, a foretaste of that eternal flame-shower which must descend upon their heads! God grant, dear Hearers, that not one of you may know what it is to be clothed with the shame of remorse!  
But the most terrible fulfillment of my text is left for another world. Then shall Christ’s enemies be clothed with shame! Servants of Satan, here is your livery! Do you say you will not put it on? Listen—“His enemies will I clothe with shame.” God will put it on you! You would not wear the robe of righteousness—you shall not be able to decline to wear the robe of shame! God, Himself, stands here, as it were, and declares that He will dress His creature in the proper garment for him to wear. You must put it on, there is no escape! You must wear it. Here is your eternal convict’s dress and, convicted of being an enemy of God, you must wear it—of all dresses the most terrible! To be clothed with pain would be far less dreadful than to be clothed with shame. I would sooner at any time feel the acute pain that is possible in the body than feel shame, for a prick of the conscience is worse than the thrust of the surgeon’s knife! To go crawling about God’s world not able to look one’s fellow creatures in the face? Why, I would sooner die! And then, in the next world, to be so ashamed that you will not be able to look even the devil in the face, because he never had a day of grace as you have had— never a Savior preached to him, never made any pretence of being converted to God and, therefore, though an enemy of Christ, has no such cause of shame as you will have! Clothed with shame! Why, they shall cry to the rocks to hide them and to the hills to cover them, for when a man is ashamed, he wants to get out of everybody’s way and, most of all, out of his own! And you will be so ashamed that you, yourselves, will be ashamed of yourselves! You will be like the man of whom we read that when the king said to him, “How came you in here, not having a wedding garment?” He was speechless. Why speechless? Shame made his tongue refuse to do its office—and so will shame do with you. You will be ashamed.  
Shall I tell you why, when you hear of the Cross of Christ and yet reject it, you will be ashamed? You will be ashamed then of your sins. You are not able, perhaps, to boast of them, now, but you will be ashamed to think, then, that they shall be published. Men are afraid, now, to have some things put in the newspaper, but what will it be when God will gazette your private sins, when He shall publish to the whole assembled world of every age, to Heaven, earth and Hell, the sins which you have committed—when they shall be read out so that all shall hear and all your filth be discovered? What shame will this revelation of secret things produce! And what will be your shame when the hypocritical profession which you have made shall also be laid bare? Then shall those who were open sinners laugh you to scorn and say of you, as the Prophet pictures the kings saying of the great monarch of Babylon, “Have you become like one of us? Have you also become weak as we, and covered with shame?” Most of all, perhaps, will you be ashamed when you see the very people you despised reigning in triumph—when you see the saints whom you laughed at sitting at the right hand of the Judge—those fools who disdain this world’s pleasures now entering into everlasting pleasure! And you, the wise man, who took the bird in the hand and would not wait for the bird in the bush—now rewarded for it all by receiving the very worst things, inasmuch as you had your best things, first, and must now have your worst things, last!  
It is a sad, sad text I have to preach upon. I would to God it would go into your souls that you may turn to the King and be no more His enemies! God, Himself, has said it—it is no word of mine, “His enemies will I clothe with shame.” He Himself, who can do it, who can make you ashamed, however proud you are—who knows how to put His hand inside your heart and touch the strings, thereof, and loosen them, so that your pride can no longer help you to bronze it out with Him—He has said it, “His enemies will I cloth with shame.” I pray you, “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.”  
Now, we shall need a little time to take the second part of our subject—“Upon Himself shall His crown flourish.” We are here very clearly taught that—  
II. THE SAVIOR WILL WEAR A CROWN, THAT THE CROWN WILL FLOURISH, THAT IT WILL FLOURISH UPON HIM!  
Brothers and Sisters, I need not detain you long by mentioning to you the crowns which Jesus wears. He has the royal crown of the kingdoms of Heaven, earth and Hell, for “the government is upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful, The Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”  
He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords! But He has a crown which He especially now wears as Head of the Church and in this He takes great delight—the crown which is called in the matchless song, “The crown wherewith His mother crowned Him in the day of His espousals.” That is the crown which the Church has put upon Him and which she still delights to put upon His head! Do you not all delight to crown the Savior, my Brothers and Sisters in Christ? What song wakes up your heart more completely than the one—

*“All hail the power of Jesus’ name!  
Let angels prostrate fall!  
Bring forth the royal diadem,  
And crown Him Lord of All!”*  
Have we not sometimes seemed to make these walls echo again and again as we sang—  
*“Crown Him, crown Him  
Crowns become the Victor’s brow”?*  
I hope He has a crown from each of our hearts and we wait for the day when we shall be taken up to cast our crowns at His feet, and to ascribe unto Him honor and Glory, and dominion and power forever and ever! Crowned once with thorns for us, He ought now to be crowned with the royal diadem! Everyone of us must seek to spend and to be spent that we may add to the luster of that tiara, that He may be exalted above all principalities and powers in the estimation of men—and that He may have a Kingdom in all men’s hearts!  
Christ is thus said to have a crown and it is added that His crown shall flourish. There are some crowns that are gradually diminishing in luster. The monarchy is growing weaker and weaker and still more effete and, by-and-by, shall be extinct, “but upon Himself shall His crown flourish.” When does a crown flourish? You understand that the very term is metaphorical. Some think that to speak of a crown flourishing is to liken the king to an antlered stag whose horns flourish. Others suppose it to be an allusion to the primitive form of crowns, as Doddridge sings— *“Fair garments of immortal joy  
Shall bloom on every head.”*  
It is a metaphor expressive of joy, comfort, tranquility in a kingdom. Now, when does a crown flourish? Does it not flourish when the sovereign is beloved by his subjects? The foundations of a throne are always to be found in the love of the people. Christ’s crown, then, indeed, flourishes, for the upright love Him! His name is as ointment poured forth! Therefore the virgins love Him. We can truly sing—  
*“Jesus, the very thought of You  
With sweetness fills my breast.”*  
We are not slaves who scarcely even talk of ourselves as being His subjects, for He has called us friends and not servants, seeing that His secret is with us. He is dear to our souls and His crown thus flourishes.  
A crown flourishes when the power of the monarch is victorious in war and acknowledged in peace. It is so with Christ. Oh, that it were more publicly so! We are praying for revivals and may God send them! May this time of God’s visitation of London in judgment be attended with a visitation in mercy! And oh, that Jesus Christ’s crown may flourish in the conquest of innumerable hearts who shall add fresh territories to the dominion of the Savior—for a crown flourishes when a king’s subjects increase and His numbers are multiplied.  
It shall be so with Christ. Until the sun has gone down with age and the moon has quenched her nightly lamp and every star has, like a withered fig leaf, fallen from the sky, Christ’s Kingdom shall go on and on! First as a brook, it seemed to leap down Calvary’s side. It has swollen to a river now. Still it deepens and widens. It becomes an ocean which shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea! Christ rose and it was twilight. Now He begins to climb the steep. And the day is coming and the full noontide draws near when He shall flood the whole earth with the splendor of His Light and His Glory—and when it shall be found that its going forth is from one end of the heavens to the other! May the longexpected day fully come! May the realms of woe, of sin and death be filled with this great Light of God! His crown shall flourish!  
It is remarkable that while all sorts of dynasties have come and gone, the dynasty of Christ still exists! How many mighty monarchs have climbed, with great slaughter, to their thrones—but where are they now? Rome has gone, but the Man of Nazareth is still King! And, besides Rome, how many empires have arisen? Earth has been shaken with the tramping of their legions, but where are their thrones and the men who filled them? They are gone, gone to the dust from which they came! But the name of Jesus shall endure forever—men shall always be blessed in Him and all generations shall call Him blessed! The day shall come, unless the Lord, Himself, appears, when the moss shall grow in the halls of the greatest kings, when the markets of commerce shall have shifted from their places. Perhaps the day may come when this modern Babylon, this emporium of all the riches of the earth, shall cease from her glory. Perhaps to western climes—for everything moves westward—the greatness may yet go. We do not know. We must not expect that our island shall abide forever Mistress of the Sea any more than any other. Venice wedded the Adriatic in her golden days, but now her canals have heard for many a day the clanking of the prisoner’s chains and long must it be before her glory can ever return. It may be so with England in days to come. But Zion shall never cease to be the city of the great King! “Those eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation.” There is a river that shall not cease to flow, whereon shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby, but there the glorious Lord shall be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams. Your Throne, O God, is forever and ever! A scepter of righteousness is Your scepter. You love righteousness and hate wickedness and, therefore, God, even Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness above Your fellows.” This, then, is the crown that flourishes!  
But do notice, once more, and then we have done, it is said, “But upon Himself shall His crown flourish.” Does it mean that the crown shall always be seen to have reference to Himself? Does it also mean that it shall be by His own power and His own Person that He shall sustain the dignity of His crown? Sometimes the crowns of monarchs seem to flourish upon the heads of their prime ministers or privy councilors. It seems as if the empire flourishes because of some admirable person at its back. But it is not so with Christ. “Upon Himself shall His crown flourish.” He won it! He wears it. He sustains it. He throws down the gauntlet to every foe who would rob Him of it! Now, this seems to say to us when we preach His Gospel, we must preach Christ, because it is upon Truths of God concerning Him that His crown shall flourish! If we do not, therefore, preach up Christ, Himself. If He is not the great Subject of our discourse. If He is not held up manifestly crucified among the people, we have kept back the mightiest theme! It is upon Himself that His crown must flourish! Brothers, suppose we give ourselves up to the preaching of Doctrine, only? What comes of it? Well, those persons who always delight in Doctrines may be, and some of them are, the very best of people, but, as a rule, there is bitterness of spirit engendered by it from which may the Lord deliver us. Even the constant preaching up of experience is pretty sure to bring such people into spiritual bondage and to make them rather care to grovel in the dust than to mount up towards the sun. But preach Christ! Make Him first and make Him last and there will be souls won and saints comforted, for, “upon Himself shall His crown flourish.”  
What is needed in the midst of His Church, then, is that the King Himself should appear in His Glory! That He should once again make bare His arm and use that mighty sword of His which cuts through coats of mail and pierces to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, joints and marrow! And when He comes, oh, when He comes, His crown, indeed, flourishes! We must pray for Him to be constantly with us by His Spirit. We must watch, also, for His personal Advent, for He whom the disciples saw go up to Heaven shall in like manner appear again. Then the Glory! Then the manifestation of the hidden ones! Then the declaration of the love of God towards those who have been under reproach and under adversity! Be of good courage, Brothers and Sisters, for He comes, He comes and then, “upon Himself shall His crown flourish!”  
I have thus tried to preach both to saint and sinner. Oh, that He would bring the sinner to Himself tonight! Oh, dear Hearer, I cannot bear the thought that you should have to wear shame as your everlasting covering! Tomorrow morning, when you are putting on your clothes, just consider how you would like to be clothed with shame. Ah, fine lady, when you are decking yourself out in all your pretty things, remember that you shall have no waiting maid to dress you in that day, but another—even God, Himself, shall come into your robing room and clothe you with a dress you would gladly never wear!  
“His enemies will I clothe with shame.” See what your livery is to be forever and ever? See what your everlasting garment is to be? God grant that you may, instead of being clothed with shame, breathe the prayer, “Lord, clothe me with Your righteousness. Wash me in Your precious blood. Make me Your friend and allow me no longer to be among those of whom it is written, ‘Shame shall be the promotion of fools.’” God bless you for Jesus’ sake, Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 95.**

Verses 1, 2. O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before His Presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto Him with Psalms. There must be, there should be joy in our worship—it is the very juice, the wine that flows from the trodden grape. It is the cream of the soul when the heart takes delight in God and joys in Him. To worship as if it were mere duty would be but the reverence of slaves before one who is dreaded, but to worship with delight—this is the adoration of children who come to One whom they love! God grant us that joy while we adore the Lord. Let us, however, mingle great reverence with joy.

3. For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods. “For the Lord is a great God.” Jehovah is a great God, “and a great King above all gods,” above all that are ever called gods, whether they are kings or magistrates, or whatever they may be.

4. In His hands are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is His also. Low and high, mysterious, sublime, the dominion of God encompasses all Nature!

5. The sea is His, for He made it: and His hands formed the dry land. Creation is the best ground for possession—what He made is His own, the great Freeholder, the Sovereign Lord of all!

6, 7. O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. For He is our God. “For He is our God.” Oh, that is the sweetest of it all—“He is our God.” Let lords and lands have what masters they will—let us obey and worship our own God!

7. And we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand. He is the Shepherd leading, feeding, protecting, guarding us every day.  
7-10. Today if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted Me, proved Me, and saw My work. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation. Was not that enough? Is there any need to grieve Him again? Think with sympathy of what God endured from one generation and let not another generation follow in their evil footsteps!  
10. And said, It is a people that do err in their heart. Not merely through ignorance, but “in their heart.” They were not alone with their feet and their tongue, but in their hearts.  
10. And they have not known My way. They have seen them but not understood them. He says, “They saw My work,” but you may see and yet not know, for what is merely seen with the eyes but not understood by the heart is not known—they were a willful, erring people—and an ignorant people.  
11. Unto whom I swore in My wrath that they should not enter into My rest. Ah me!

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HEARING, SEEKING, FINDING  
NO. 2590

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, OCTOBER 2, 1898.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 24, 1883.

**“Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the woods. We will go into His tabernacles: we will worship at His footstool.” Psalm 132:6, 7.**

LONG before David’s time, the Ark of the Lord had been almost forgotten by the children of Israel. It formed a most important part of the Ceremonial Law which God had ordained. I may almost call it the central portion of that pattern which was shown to Moses in the mountain. But the Ark had been carried into captivity by the Philistines and, afterwards, the terrible judgment worked upon the men of Beth-Shemesh may have made many afraid to go near it. So it remained a long time in KirjathJearim and there David found it. And, after leaving it for a while at the house of Obed-Edom, brought it up to Jerusalem with great rejoicing. David’s heart was so full of zeal for God that he desired that every part of the Lord’s worship should be carried out with due order and proper solemnity. He wished to see a sanctuary built in which the Ark of the Lord should rest in its place and the worship of God should be carried out as He judged was meet and fit.

The first thing, therefore, for David to do was to find the Ark, for, as I have already said, it was a central portion of the Divinely-ordained Ceremonial Law. The Ark was put away in the Most Holy Place and it was an express and notable symbol of the Presence of God among the people. It was there, from above the Mercy Seat, that God met with man and communed with him in the person of the High Priest. It was there that the Shekinah glory, denoting the special Presence of God, shone forth between the cherubim. It is clear, therefore, that if David meant to restore the worship of God to its due and proper order, his first business was to find the Ark. Yet, without forgetting that fact, I am not going to talk so much about David finding the Ark as to think of some who are in the condition in which I once was. When I desired to find God, I longed to meet with Him, in the Person of Christ, in His own appointed way, but I could not find Christ. My heart was dark, my eyes were blind and I looked everywhere but in the right place. I did not look where the true Light of God was shining. But, at last, I resolved that I must find Him and I did, by His Grace, find Him! I found Him where I little expected to find Him and now, having found Him, myself, I have it on my heart to come and speak to everyone who is saying, “Oh, that I knew where I might find Him!” It may be that my message shall be like the voice that reached poor Hagar in the wilderness, when she and her son were ready to perish with thirst, though there was a well of water close at hand. As the Lord said to her, “What ails you, Hagar?” so would I ask, “What ails you, poor seeking Soul, when Christ is so near?” His people will breathe a prayer for you that you may find Him even while I speak to you.

I. My first remark will be that, LIKE DAVID, WE WISH TO FIND THE ARK, THAT ARK BEING CHRIST.  
Dear Friends, most here present—and I should suppose, all—are well instructed as to where God will meet with us as our reconciled God. The symbol was the Ark of the Covenant. And the Mercy Seat, the reality, we know is Christ. We know this, I say, for most of us have been instructed in the Scriptures from our youth up. Oh, that we all knew it in our hearts!  
Now, concerning that Ark, the first point to be noted is that it was covered with a golden Mercy Seat which was the place of forgiveness when it was sprinkled with the sacrificial blood. Those who came to it, through the High Priest, knew that God had accepted them and forgiven their sins. You and I know that we can never meet with God except at the Mercy Seat which is Christ Jesus, the Lord! Christ made an Atonement, a Propitiation, for our sins—He “offered Himself without spot to God.” Though in Him was no sin, yet He was made sin for us. For our sake He came under the curse of the broken Law of God and now, if we want to meet with God, it must be at the Mercy Seat, by the Propitiation which Christ has made. You say that you know this is the case—then never try to meet God anywhere else, for remember that He is a consuming fire! There is no safety in making any attempt to come to God except by Christ Jesus, the one Mediator between God and men. His pierced body, that torn veil, is the only means of access for a sinner to a holy God!  
In addition to this, the Ark was not only a Mercy Seat, but it was a Throne of Grace. God sat there, as it were, upon a throne of mercy and to us, today, the Lord Jesus Christ is the Throne of Grace. God in Christ Jesus is our reigning God, stretching out the silver scepter of His mercy and accepting all who come to Him. Do you want to pray, poor Soul, so that God will hear you? Then plead the blood of Christ! Do you wish to pour out your burdened spirit before the God of Grace? Then come with the name of Christ in your mouth and His blood trusted in your heart— and you shall not be refused! There is no meeting place with God, there is no place for prevailing prayer, but where you meet God in the Person of Jesus Christ the one great Sin-Offering!  
Then, further, the Ark was the place of God’s Manifestation. As much as could be seen of the Glory of God was seen between the cherubim. It is said that a bright light always rested there as a token of Jehovah’s perpetual Presence—and if you would see the Glory of God, you must look into the face of Jesus Christ. “No man can see God’s face and live.” But we may see the face of Christ and live by seeing it! But only through the veil of Christ’s Humanity can we see it. I have noticed that when men look at the sun, it has to be through smoked glass. And when we look at God, it must be through the Incarnation of Christ, who was found in fashion as a Man, though He thought it not a prize to be grasped to be equal with God.  
Furthermore, David knew, and you also know, that there were within the Ark three notable things—first, the tablets of stone which God had ordered to be placed there for preservation. There was, next, the golden pot with manna. And then there was also Aaron’s rod that budded. Now, if you come to Christ, you will find in Him all that these things represented and all that you need.  
First, there is preserved the complete, vindicated and honored Law of God. You will never be able, in your own strength, to keep the Law of the Lord—you will break it as surely as you live. Yet you cannot be accepted without a perfect righteousness! Unless God sees you clothed in the garments of righteousness, He will never admit you to the wedding feast. So where are you to get that spotless robe? It is in Christ, for faith is imputed for righteousness to him who believes in the Son of God, even as Abraham believed in God and it was accounted to him for righteousness! But how is righteousness imputed to the guilty? Why, the Believer lays hold of the righteousness of Jesus Christ and it is reckoned as if it were his own! “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous.” That “One” is the Lord, our Righteousness, and when we put on His robe of righteousness, we stand before God, “holy as the Holy One.” If, then, you need a perfect Law, you will only find it in Christ. If any say that they have it in themselves, I believe that is only setting up another and a false Christ, for it is a derogation to the special Glory of Christ, of whom alone it can be said that He has magnified the Law and made it honorable by keeping it perfectly! I have no righteousness in and of myself, nor has any child of God any of his own—any that we once thought we had, we do count but dross and dung—that we may win Christ and be found in Him, not having our own righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. Oh, how we need, then, to find the Ark, Christ Jesus, that we may see, there, the unbroken tablets of the Law of God!

But every child of God also needs spiritual food. If the Lord has quickened you, He has given you hunger with your new life, for spiritual hunger always goes with spiritual life and you are saying, “Oh, that I might but eat of the crumbs that the little dogs get under their master’s table—I must have some spiritual meat!” You will never have it till you get where the golden pot of manna is to be found. There is the food of the saints treasured up in Christ! There is no food for a soul even in Heaven except in Christ Jesus. He is the Manna, of which, if a man eats, he shall live forever! This shall satisfy his soul, strengthen him, build him up and develop him into a perfect man in Christ Jesus! But you must come to Christ for the food that was typified by the golden pot full of manna.  
I think that I hear someone say, “I remember that a third thing that was in the Ark was Aaron’s rod that budded. And that reminds me that I need a power that can rule me, that can say to my rebellious passions, ‘Be still,’ and that can make me walk in the way of God’s commands, even bringing every wandering thought into captivity.” Well, there is no rod that I know of that can rule our rebellious nature but the rod of Christ Jesus, the great High Priest of God! Once let that blessed rod be all-powerful over us, and with it shall come all manner of buds, blossoms and ripe fruit to our soul. Jesus said, “Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls.” Only from that rod can come the perfect fruit-bearing that every true child of God desires to produce!  
II. This leads me to my second remark, which is that knowing what we do about Christ, the Ark, WE DESIRE TO FIND HIM.  
I hope that I am addressing some who could even use the language of David and say that they intensely desire to find Him. They cry to the mighty God of Jacob in their affliction and with their whole heart and soul they long to find Christ! David made a vow about it, for his heart was set upon finding the Ark. Dear Friend, is your heart set upon finding Christ, or are you merely trifling with Him? Have you been so thoroughly awakened by the Holy Spirit that within you there burns a strong desire, insatiable as death, itself, so that you feel that you must find Christ? If so, I am happy to be addressing you—and you are already a happy person to have this hungering and thirsting after Christ, for that holy craving shall be fully satisfied with Him.  
David thirsted to find this Ark immediately and so much in earnest was he that he said, “Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes, or slumber to me eyelids until I find out a place for the Lord.” Oh, when it comes to this—that you must have Christ, then you shall have Christ! When with every breath you seem to say, “Give me Christ, or else I die,” then you shall not die, but you shall have Christ and live! I have heard of some who have at last been driven to such a pitch of vehement determination that they have gone into their chamber and said, “By the Grace of God I will never leave this place until I have found my Lord.” I knew one who said, “I dare not eat till I have found Christ, lest every morsel should choke me.” And in the ardor of his spirit to roll himself upon his Savior and to be cleansed in His precious blood, he cast himself upon his knees and cried to his God—and the Lord revealed Himself to him! If you must have Christ, you shall have Him! But if you can be put off, you shall be put off.  
Next, David sought the Ark most reverently, for he recognized it as being a token of the Presence of “the mighty God of Jacob.” And you and I must seek Christ reverently. I do not like to hear the irreverent appeals of those who speak of Christ as though He were to be seized by force and carried off against all law and justice. Truly, “the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence,” but it is the violence of humble men and women who dare to act with holy boldness because they are encouraged by their God. That I, a poor sinner, should ever speak with God in a sort of bullying tone, as I have heard some do, as though they said even to their God, “Stand and deliver,” this will never do! Your mouth is in the best position when it is in the dust—and your heart is nearest to prevailing with God when it is bowed even to the ground. “Out of the depths have I cried to You, O Lord,” should be the language with which we humbly approach His Throne of Grace.  
But while David thus sought very reverently, yet observe that it was with intense desire that he might receive this Ark when once he found it. He wanted to find it, but his ultimate objective was to harbor it, to give hospitality to it, to find a resting place for it. And oh, dear Heart, if you want to find Christ, let it be with this desire, “Oh, that He may come and live in my soul, and be my own personal Christ! I do not want merely to hear about Him, to be taught about Him—I want to have Him—and if He is to be had, I will have Him! If there is Grace beneath the sky for a poor sinner, then I, the chief of sinners, will not rest until I find rest in Him.” If I am speaking to any here of that kind, I say again that I am thrice happy!  
III. Proceeding still further with our subject and coming directly to our text—first, knowing what this Ark is, and then desiring to find it—thirdly, WE HAVE HEARD WHERE IT IS—“Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah.”  
“We heard of it.” And is it not a blessed thing that we have heard about where Christ is? Where did you first hear of Him? I do not know whether, by Ephratah, David meant Bethlehem. Some think he did. That was the place where he was born and in his own father’s house David had heard about the Ark. And there are some of us who can say with overflowing gratitude that we heard about Christ in our Ephratah, in our Bethlehem. His dear name was mingled with our mother’s hush of lullaby. Among the earliest recollections I have are memories of hymns about the Lord Jesus Christ! The Word of God was our first school book—do we not remember, as little children, spelling out in Matthew, and Mark, and Luke, and John, something about that dear Lord? “We heard of it at Ephratah,” in our earliest home—if that is the meaning of David’s words.  
Oh, but, if you heard of Christ so soon, why have you not found Him yet? You who go to market know that there is nothing like the morning market—and there is nothing like seeking Christ early. They that seek Him early, shall find Him. If others do not, they shall—they shall find Him with an emphasis—find Him to a degree and in a measure in which some others do not. Oh, go to Christ in the morning market! Be the first there to buy the Truth of God and never sell it!  
But Ephratah means—well, I do not know what it means, nor do any of the critics—it probably means some town of Ephraim. And I do not know and some of you do not know, perhaps, where you did not hear about Christ. You went to Sunday school and you heard of Him there. You went home and you heard of Him there. In these days, there are agencies that surround men so that they are often hearing of Him. Some here present have long heard of Christ and you are always hearing about Him—is it not time that you should get further than merely knowing and hearing—and should intensely seek until you find Him? You have heard of Christ from ministers. They have told you, many a time, where Christ is. You have heard of Him from Christian men and women. I hope that you will hear of Him again tonight from some Brother or Sister who will buttonhole you before you get out of this place, for there are some here who are very quick at that blessed work! And they will be sharp after you, for their love to you is great and they cannot bear that a soul should ever come within these walls and then, at last, be lost. I do pray the Lord that none ever may!  
Oh, that your coming here might be the result of God’s Grace working upon your soul, that you may be saved! I remember one friend coming to me and he said to me very earnestly, “I should like, Sir, to take a seat in the Tabernacle.” I answered, “Well, do so, by all manner of means! I am very glad when people do so.” “But,” he said, “I may not come up to what you expect of me, for I have heard that if I take a sitting here, you will expect me to be converted—and I cannot guarantee that.” “No,” I replied, “I do not want you to guarantee it. I do not mean the word, expect, in that sense at all, but I do hope that it will be so.” “Oh,” he exclaimed, “and so do I! I am going to take a sitting with that very view.” And it was so, of course it was so! When the man wished it to be so, God accepted the wish and heard the prayer—and he was brought to Christ and joined the Church! May everyone who comes here have to say, “Well, wherever we did not hear about Christ, we did hear of Him at the Tabernacle—that was our Ephratah. We were told where He was and we received plain and clear directions as to how we might find Him.”  
IV. Now, fourthly, the next words are, “WE FOUND IT.”  
You remember the learned Grecian who, when he had made a discovery while in the bath, leaped out of it and ran down the streets crying, “Eureka! Eureka! I have found it! I have found it!” Oh, those are the best words in my text! “We found it.”  
Well, where did we find it? David said that he found it “in the fields of the woods,” that is, where he did not expect to find it. Have not many of us found Christ where we never thought we should find Him? “Oh,” says one, “I shall never go to Heaven, I am sure, through the preaching of Mr. So-and-So! I cannot stand him. I am sure I would never get a blessing among such-and-such people.” And, perhaps, dear Friend, the very man that you have thought could not be a blessing to you is to be made a blessing to you—and the very place where you did not expect to find Christ will be the exact spot where you shall meet with Him!

In the case of David finding the Ark, it was not only where he could not have expected it, but it was in a place that was despised—a rustic place—“in the fields of the woods.” Perhaps the Lord may lead you to some very plain minister, without any polish, or talent, or ability—a rustic speaker—a very Amos and, lo, there you will find the Ark of the Lord! If the Lord will guide you to Heaven through the word of a chimneysweep, it would be far better than that you should go to Hell under the ministry of the most eloquent orator or the greatest bishop who ever lived. If you are brought to Jesus Christ by one who murders the Queen’s English—it is a pity that he should do that but, still, it does not matter much, so long as he does not murder the Lord’s Gospel, for the Gospel comes out straight and clear, despite his broken words. Then you will, as it were, find Christ “in the fields of the woods.” I have known some who have found Christ in a very lowly place. They have gone away from all companions and up in their own little room they have sought and found Him. I knew one who found the Savior down a saw-pit and another who found Him in a hayloft. Some have walked the streets of London and have been more alone, there, than anywhere else and, as they have trudged along, men have seemed to them like trees walking—they have found Christ, figuratively, “in the fields of the woods.” Get alone, dear Friends—it is horrible to live in a crowd! I do not know how a man’s spiritual life is to be constantly maintained in a crowd—he must often be alone. “You, when you pray, enter into your closet, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father which is in secret.”  
“We found it in the fields of the woods,” may, perhaps, mean, Brothers and Sisters, that you will find Christ where you lose yourselves. You know that it is very easy to lose yourself in the woods. You get in among the trees and you do not know whether you should turn to the right or to the left. Or you are in “the fields of the woods” and you are quite lost, for you cannot tell which way to go. The nearest thing to being saved is knowing that one is lost! When a man is really lost in his own consciousness, the next thing is for him to be saved. The end of yourself is the beginning of Christ. May the Lord cause you to know that you are thoroughly lost, and then soon you shall sing, “We found Christ in the woods where we lost ourselves.”  
It has struck me, too, in thinking over our text, that often we find Christ very near to us. Where did Adam go after he had disobeyed his Lord? He went and hid himself among the trees. And you and I found Christ where we were hiding—we did not know that He was among the trees of the woods—we thought that we were out of sight of God and far away from Heaven and Grace and mercy. Yet all the time, there was the mercy close at hand. Poor Sinner, you do not know how easy it is to be saved. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved.” You do not know how near that salvation is to you. “The Word is near you, even in your mouth, and in your heart: that is, the Word of faith which we preach; that if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.”  
V. Fifthly, and very briefly, “WE WILL GO.” “We will go into His tabernacles.”  
Now that we have found where Christ is and we can go to Him, we will have Him. We will go to God in Christ—“we will go into His tabernacles.” We will not delay a minute longer, but we will, even now, by faith, go to the great Father in His own appointed way. We will go to Him for all that He is prepared to give—“we will go into His tabernacles” to find the Mercy Seat, to bow before the Throne of Grace, to behold the Glory of God, to eat of the manna, to see the perfect Law of God and to come under the governance of the blessed rod that buds. “We will go into His tabernacles,” first, into the outer court. Then, into the inner court and, last of all, into the Holy of Holies. It is a blessed thing to see a soul on the go towards God when Christ becomes the Way!  
“We will go into His tabernacles” and we will dwell there. We will dwell with God. We will get back to the Father’s House where there is “bread enough and to spare,” and there we will stay. We will go to learn of God. We will be the disciples of Christ. We will go and we will go at once. Oh, I wish that I could hear some saying, “We will go. We know about Christ, we have found Him near us—we will now go and simply trust and rest— and so dwell in the great Father’s love.” God grant that you may do so!  
VI. And then the last word is, WE WILL WORSHIP. “We will worship at His footstool.”  
In lowly reverence we will bow ourselves down in the very dust, for we are but dust and ashes even when we are saved. “We will worship at His footstool.” That is, with deepest solemnity, for even His Ark, His Temple, is but the footstool of the great King! Oh, what must He be! Heaven is His Throne, but the earth is His footstool. This world is a wonderful place. I have looked upon mountains, hills, valleys and mighty seas—yet the whole earth is nothing but the footstool of God! Let us go, then, and worship before Him in lowly reverence and with deepest solemnity.  
But let us worship there with great joy. His “saints shall shout aloud for joy” and, as they bow at His footstool, it shall not be as slaves, but as His chosen and accepted ones. Let us also bow there very gratefully, blessing God that He has brought us to His feet. Part of the preparation for Heaven is to worship at God’s footstool on earth, but, by-and-by, we shall worship in His palace above! “We will go and worship” because we have found Christ and He is ours! May this be true of all of you, dear Friends, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 132.**

This Psalm is a prayer and pleading of the Covenant, such a prayer as might have been offered by Solomon at the opening of the Temple, or by any of the descendants of David, either in their times of joy or in their seasons of affliction. It divides itself into three parts. In the first seven verses, mention is made of David’s zeal for the Ark and for the House of the Lord. Then, in three more verses, there follows the prayer at the moving of the Ark. And then the last verses mention the Covenant which God made with His servant, David, which is pleaded by David’s descendants in later years. The Psalm begins thus—

Verse 1. LORD, (or Jehovah), remember David, and all his afflictions. We cannot come before God in our own name; so what a mercy it is that we have a good name to plead! You and I do not approach the Lord in the name of any saint or holy man—we plead the name of “great David’s greater Son” and with the utmost emphasis can we say, “Lord, remember Jesus, and all His afflictions—His griefs and sorrows on our behalf.” This was a most proper prayer, however, as it stands, from those who belonged to David’s race—they pleaded the name of him with whom God had entered into Covenant on the behalf of all his seed—“Lord, remember David, and all his trouble—his trouble which he took about Your house, and about Your Ark.”

2 *.*How he swore unto the LORD, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob. Jacob was the great maker of vows and you will also remember that Jacob, on his dying bed, made mention of “the mighty God of Jacob.” David, in this Psalm, imitated his forefathers—he made a solemn vow to the Lord that he would build a house for God, even as Jacob did when he said, “If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and clothes to put on, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God. And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God’s house.”

3 **-**5*.*Surely 1 will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to my eyes, or slumber to my eyelids until I find a place for the LORD, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob. He used strong words to signify that his house would be no house to him and that he would not regard his bed as a place of rest until he had discovered where God would dwell. It means that he would give himself wholly up to this project—it would be his life-work to find a suitable place for the worship of the Most High. I wish that this same zeal would take firm hold of all Christians. How many there are who dwell in their ceiled houses while the House of God lies in waste! They can provide abundantly for themselves, but for God’s cause, for God’s Gospel, for a place wherein the poor may meet for the preaching of the Word, they do not seem to care. May the Lord give us to feel something of this selfdenial and devotion to God that moved the heart of David!

6 **,**7*.*Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the woods. We will go into His tabernacles: we will worship at His footstool. This is what David did and you see what trouble he took in the matter. But you know that he was not permitted to build a house for God. Yet he had the same reward as if he had done so, for God built up his house and established his dynasty for many generations! God often takes the will for the deed with His servants. And when they wish to do a good work and there is some reason why they may not carry out their plans, the Lord looks upon them and gives them the same reward as if they had accomplished their design. After all, dear Friends, David wised to build a house for God and although it was very right and proper in itself, yet, in the sight of God, it was but a small matter! He took little account of Solomon’s Temple, though it was “exceedingly magnificent!” You remember how Stephen said, just as a sort of passing remark of no great importance, “Solomon built Him an house. Howbeit, the Most High dwells not in temples made with hands.” And it is a very curious fact in history that from the very day in which the great Temple was dedicated, spiritual religion began to decline in the land! God’s worship was never more pure than when it was rendered in a tent in a humble way. But, as soon as the great gilded Temple was erected and priestly pomp began to display itself, it seemed as if men began to depart from the spiritual worship of Jehovah. How often it is that the more gorgeous the Ceremonial Law, the less hearty and the less spiritual the worship becomes! Our great and glorious God who fills Heaven and earth takes small account of noble architecture and earthly pomp and splendor, or of the sweetness of music, or the fumes of incense. He is far above all that is merely sensuous! He delights to dwell where there are broken hearts that He can bind and where genuine Believers worship Him in spirit and in truth.

8-10. Arise, O LORD, into Your rest; You, and the Ark of Your strength. Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness; and let Your saints shout for joy. For Your servant David’s sake turn not away the face of Your anointed. Turn back for a minute to the 8th verse. “Arise, O Jehovah, into Your rest.” This exclamation was very similar to the language which Moses used whenever the Ark set forward—“Rise up, Jehovah, and let Your enemies be scattered; and let them that hate You flee before You.” And when it rested, he said, “Return, O Jehovah, unto the many thousands of Israel.” So David did well to use similar words when the Ark was, at lat, brought to its resting place. He calls it the Ark of God’s Strength, for such it really was. It had done great wonders. It was when the Ark was borne by the priests into the midst of Jordan that the river was divided so that the people could pass over with dry feet. Even when the Ark was taken captive, it brought disaster to the Philistines. And when the men of Beth-Shemesh irreverently looked into it, great numbers of them were slain! It was truly the Ark of God’s Strength—the great type of the power of God in Christ Jesus our Lord! In the 9th verse we read, “Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness.” That is the best robe that he can wear who serves God! And you know that all of us who believe in Jesus have been made kings and priests unto God. Righteousness, therefore, should be the garment which we wear from head to foot. “And let Your saints shout for joy.” God’s holy ones should be happy ones! No man has so much right to be happy as he that is holy. We serve the happy God—we may well be happy ourselves—and we are not to keep our happiness hidden within our own hearts. “Let Your saints shout for joy.” Let them exult, let them triumph, let them express their delight. The 10th verse is a prayer for the king and for the whole line of kings—the Psalmist pleads with the Lord to continue to look upon them for the sake of David with whom He had made His Covenant. Now the Psalm finishes with the Covenant made with David.

11. The LORD has sworn in truth unto David; He will not turn from it, I will set upon your throne the fruit of your body. That was literally fulfilled in a long line of kings, but it is more gloriously fulfilled in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. David the prophet-king is dead, but he, seeing before that God would raise up Christ, laid hold upon this precious promise, “I will set upon your throne the fruit of your body.” Our Lord Jesus Christ is the King of the Jews, but He is also King of kings and Lord of lords and, as God has set Him on the Throne, neither devils nor men can ever pull Him from it.

12. If Your children will keep My Covenant and My Testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon your throne forevermore. And so it would have been. The kingdom of Israel would never have been broken up, either by internal rebellion or external attack, if it had not been that the kings flagrantly turned aside from God. He bore with them very long, but they waxed worse and worse and, at last, God’s Covenant had to be kept, through their default, by a deed of vengeance against them. Yet today, in spirit, this Covenant stands fast, for the Lord Jesus has kept it on His people’s behalf and now He shall sit upon the throne of David forevermore, blessed be His holy name!

13. For the LORD has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation. Here are some of the sweetest words that were ever written! There are fathomless depths of sweetness in them, for here we have the Truth of God concerning the election of the Church of God. “The Lord has chosen Zion.” Some men cannot endure to hear the Doctrine of Election—I suppose they like to choose their own wives, but they are not willing that Christ should select His bride, the Church! Everybody is to have a free will except God! But let them know that God still exercises a Sovereign choice among the sons of men. Jesus said to His disciples, “You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you.” Blessed be His name, the Truth still stands! “The Lord has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His habitation.” We delight to dwell with those whom we love and God so loves His Church that He desires to always dwell in it—and He does dwell in it by His Spirit—and a day shall come when the perfected Church, the new Jerusalem, shall come down out of Heaven from God, having the Glory of the Lord, and the Lamb shall be the Light thereof. You know how the last chapters of the Book of Revelation describe the glorified Church and God dwelling in the midst of it. “The Lord has chosen Zion.” That is the first thing—election. “He has desired it for His habitation. That is the next thing—the indwelling of the Spirit of God in the Church. And this is one of the greatest marvels of which we have ever heard!

14. This is My resting place forever. Is it not amazing that God, Jehovah, should say of His people, “This is My resting place forever”? Now, if He rests, I am sure that we may! It is very remarkable that when God was making the world, He never rested till He had fitted it up for His child, and everything was ready for Adam. God never stopped His work till there was everything that Adam could desire. And when it was all complete, then He rested the seventh day. So, when He has done everything for His Church, when His work for her is all completed, then Christ rests, but not till then! He says, by the mouth of Isaiah, “For Zion’s sake will I not hold My peace, and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest until the righteousness thereof goes forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burns.” But that being once accomplished, He says, “This is My rest forever.” God does not rest in the work of His hands as a Creator, He rests in the work of Christ as the Redeemer!

14. Here will I dwell; for I have desired it. God dwells in His Church and will dwell in it. He has desired to do so and His desire will certainly be realized—who can cause Him to be disappointed?

15. I will abundantly bless her provisions. By which I understand that there will be provisions, that there will be abundant provisions and that there will be abundant blessings on those provisions. God grant that we may always find it so! Let us plead this precious, “I will.” “I will abundantly bless her provisions.”

15 *.*I will satisfy her poor with bread. Poor, and yet satisfied—satisfied with bread! Yes, but what kind of bread? The Bread that came down from Heaven, the Bread of God, which is Christ Jesus, whose flesh is meat, indeed, and whose blood is drink, indeed. “I will satisfy her poor with bread.” The Lord does not say anything about her rich. No, but we read in another place, “The rich He has sent away empty.” I wish to always remain among the poor of the Lord’s flock—not to put my name down among those perfect people who are so rich in Grace that they are obliged to tell everybody about it! No, I would be poor in spirit—emptied more and more, lying lowly and humbly at my Lord’s feet. I am the more ready to do this because I perceive that the Lord has prepared all His goodness for the poor in spirit. “I will satisfy her poor with bread.”

16. I will also clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy. The prayer in the 8th verse was, “Arise, O Lord, into Your rest.” In the 14th verse, we read the answer, “This is My rest forever: here will I dwell.” Then in the 9th verse was the petition, “Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness.” Now the Lord gives the response, “I will also clothe her priests with salvation.” Righteousness is only a part of salvation, but oh, what glorious raiment it is when a man once wears the silken dress of salvation! Talk of “cloth of gold”—there is nothing among royal array that can be compared to the vestments of the saints! I go in for vestments when they are those of which the Lord says, “I will also clothe her priests with salvation.” They shall be covered over with it, from head to foot, so that there shall be nothing of His people to be seen but His own salvation! Notice the prayer in the 9th verse, “Let Your saints shout for joy.” And the answer is here, “Her saints shall shout aloud for joy.” God always gives more than we ask! Silver prayers get golden answers! “Open your mouth wide,” He says, “and I will fill it.” Yes, and then open it again and He will fill it yet again, for He “is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.”

17. There will I make the horn of David to bud. As a stag’s horn grows, putting out fresh buds and branches, so shall the power of David be increased and enlarged. We see that promise fulfilled spiritually in the growing Kingdom of Christ.

17 *.*I have ordained a lamp for My Anointed. His name shall never go out like an extinguished lamp. If it is blown out, once, as it were, in the death of Solomon or any other, king, yet from that lamp shall another be lighted. The Lord says, I have ordained a lamp,” and Christ will always be a source of brightness in the world! He will always be “a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel.” As the holy lamp in the sanctuary was never to go out, so has God ordained that Christ shall always shine to the joy and delight of His people.

18. His enemies will I clothe with shame. In this Psalm two sets of clothing are mentioned and you can have which you like. Here is one, “I will clothe her priests with salvation.” And here is the other, “His enemies will I clothe with shame.” Shame is a terrible thing! Many a man has thrown away his life to try to escape from the shame of a guilty conscience. But the ungodly will be forever clothed with shame and they will be eternally condemned. “His enemies,” that is the description of the ungodly. It is of small account what your outward character appears to be— if you are an enemy of Christ, these are the garments in which you will die—and these are the garments in which you will continue to suffer forever. “His enemies will I clothe with shame.”

18. But upon Himself shall His crown flourish. Upon Christ the laurel wreath, or rather, the Crown of Glory, shall never wither. “He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He has set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for His law.”

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A STRANGE YET GRACIOUS CHOICE  
NO. 2600

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, DECEMBER 11, 1898.

**BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, (on its re-opening after repairs),  
ON THURSDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 6, 1883.

**“For the LORD has chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure.”  
Psalm 135:4.**

This is a Psalm of praise all through. It is to be sung to the highsounding cymbals. There is not a low note anywhere—it is all robust, exhilarating, joyful! It is “Hallelujah!” from beginning to end and it did not seem possible to the Psalmist that he could omit from it the high jubilant note of election, for if there is anything that makes Believers’ hearts sing unto the Lord, it is the recollection that He has chosen them and fixed His love upon them! “You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you,” is one of the best reasons in the world why we should adore the Lord with all our heart and mind and soul and strength! If the Lord has made us to be His people, we will, indeed, with joy and gladness declare Him to be our God! If He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, we will make such return to Him as we can, and bless Him with our loudest and sweetest music. Blessed be the Lord because He “has chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure.”

It may be said that this verse relates to the seed of Abraham. So it does, but please remember that everything which belonged to the seed of Abraham after the flesh belongs yet more to those who are the seed of Abraham according to the spirit! Indeed, there always was a peculiar blessing which never came to those who were only born according to the flesh, for Ishmael received it not, neither did Esau enter into it. The line of inheritance is the line of promise, the line of the Divine choice, and if you and I have believed in Jesus Christ, we are in that spiritual line! The mark of that line is faith—they that believe are of the seed of believing Abraham. His very name is “the father of the faithful” and those that are full of faith—the faithful—are the true seed of Abraham. The Covenant in its highest and best meaning is theirs—it was made with Abraham on their account. Therefore we shall take all there is in this verse to ourselves if we are, indeed, God’s covenanted ones! If He has brought us into the bond of the Covenant by a work of Grace upon our hearts, and we are now one with that glorious promised Seed, the Lord Jesus Christ, then it is true of us and of all who are like us in this respect—“The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure.”

I. The first thing which lies upon the very surface of our text is THE CHOICE—“The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself.”  
This choice is a Divine one. It is the Lord that has chosen Jacob, that very Lord who made the heavens and the earth! Jehovah, in whose hands are all things. He has made the choice and it is a very wonderful thing, though we speak of it as if it were a commonplace Truth of God. Yet, if we dive into its depths, we shall see that it is truly marvelous that God should ever have chosen any of the fallen race of mankind! He once regretted that He had made men upon the face of the earth, so sinful had they become, yet, knowing beforehand all about their wickedness, the Lord was pleased to make a choice of men. He might have chosen angels, but let it always stand as a wonderful instance of His mysterious Sovereignty that He did not choose the fallen angels—no, not even one of them! Our Lord Jesus Christ “took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham.”  
Why was it that all the hosts of spiritual beings that fell with Lucifer are left in their fallen state without any hope of salvation, while God’s eternal election has fallen upon the sons of men? Why, indeed! We can never understand it and can give no answer but this, “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.” The choice, however, was Divine, and let us not get away from that glorious Truth of God. It will give you, Believer, the highest joy to know that the Lord has chosen you—and that knowledge will be to you a source of great strength. It will also be one of the best rebukes to the devil. You remember how, when Joshua, the High Priest, was standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan was standing at his right hand to resist him, the Lord said to the accuser, “The Lord rebuke you, O Satan; even the Lord that has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you!” There is no slap in the face for the devil that is so painful to him as that declaration, “The Lord has chosen Jerusalem; He has elected His people and you, O Satan, may do what you will, but you cannot change the choice of God! If He has chosen anyone, that man is of the conquering Seed before whom you have begun to fall, as Haman fell before Mordecai. But you shall fall yet lower, for the Lord has promised to the godly that He will bruise Satan under their feet shortly.” God has chosen them! It is He that says it and, therefore, let the full force of the blessed Truth of God come to each believing heart, “I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness have I drawn you.” There is an infinite sweetness in that thought!  
The choice, being Divine, is also sovereign. About this point, we are not left to speculation, for Paul has told us that “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 to their mother Rebecca, “The elder shall serve the younger.” The Divine purpose was made in that case irrespective of character, for no character had been developed! If anyone says that it was made on account of character foreseen, I reply that there was no good character to foresee, but as far as Jacob is concerned, although Grace did make him into a true Patriarch and heir of the promise, yet by nature he was a very poor stick. As I read what he does, when his human nature is uppermost, I feel that there is nothing in him why any mortal man should choose him, and certainly there is no reason why God should do so! There is nothing foreseen about him except that God foresees that He will make him gracious—but that is not the reason why He makes him gracious!  
There is, at the back of it all, the reason that the Lord gave to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” I find such a stuttering and stammering about this great Truth of God in these days that I mean to be all the more emphatic in preaching it, for I believe that this doctrine largely helps in producing that state of spirit into which God would have sinners brought so as to make them feel that they have no claim upon Him—no right to His mercy and that, if He gives it, He gives it simply because He chooses to give it! The choice was made by that great King who has a right to do as He wills and who exercises that right and, therefore, the declaration stands in our text, “Jehovah has chosen Jacob unto Himself.”  
So we have seen that the choice is Divine and sovereign.  
And, Beloved, it is a most gracious choice. As I have already said, the more we look at the character of Jacob, the more we must discard all idea that he was chosen for what he was by nature. From his birth, he bore the name of a supplanter and his brother, Esau, bitterly said, “Is not he rightly named Jacob (that is, a supplanter)? For he has supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright and, behold, now he has taken away my blessing.” The expression really is in the original, “Is not he rightly named Jacob? For he has Jacobed me these two times.” He had supplanted his brother—put him out of his proper place. He was truly the father of all the Jews and, though I will say nothing to their disparagement, yet at driving a bargain are they not the masters of us all? And such was Jacob from the very beginning! So, as God chose him, assuredly He chose him of His Grace and for no other reason than because He would do it. Election was not of works, certainly, in Jacob’s case, but of Grace and of Grace alone!  
And, putting all things together, was it not a very wonderful thing that the Lord should choose Jacob? There were other men upon the face of the earth of whom God might have made a nation and from whom He might have formed the chosen Seed. I do not suppose that even after Abraham and Isaac had come to know the Lord, they were the only people in the world who knew Him. Doubtless, there were some scattered up and down, like Job, who, I should think, is but a sample of many others. It seems to me that if we had been about to choose a man who should found a race, we should have said, “There, Job is the man! ‘Perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.’” He was a right princely man—I sometimes think that he was the grandest of all men, when I see him sitting on a dunghill, transforming it into a throne and reigning there right royally, while he says—“The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” It was a noble saying of the man who cannot be said to be less than the very greatest of mankind! “You have heard of the patience of Job,” and all the world shall hear of it again and again while there are ears to hear and tongues to speak! And yet, though Job is chosen unto salvation, he is not the founder of a great race—it is not in his line that the promised Messiah is to be found, but—“the Lord has chosen Jacob.”

Ah, me, why did He do it? When you have told me why He chose Jacob, I shall then try to find out why He chose me! And if I should find that out, probably you will, at the same time, discover why He chose you. It is all a great mystery of Grace and must be left with Him who does as He wills—not without reasons, mark you—but without reasons that are revealed to us. God never acts unreasonably, yet He does not find His reasons for acting in men, but within Himself, in the heart of His compassion, in the eternal counsels of His own will. Do not think that we are talking of God as we speak of men. A man, who has a strong will, and who carries it out as he pleases, is a very dangerous person. A despot, let him be ever so gentle, is a terrible being! But God—the infinitely Holy, the perfectly Just, the supremely Good—we may well leave everything with Him. It is not merely that we must do so, but it is the best and wisest course for us! Even if we could “snatch from His hands the balance and the rod,” into what other hands could we put them? No, they must remain with Him, and we are glad it is so. To me the unlimited dominion of God is glorious. I want to have no constitutional monarchy upon the Throne of Heaven. No, let Jehovah do absolutely as He wills, for His will must be perfect justice, perfect goodness, perfect righteousness!  
So we leave this first point, the choice—“The Lord has chosen Jacob.”  
II. The second part of our subject is full of practical teaching, for it concerns THE REASON OR RESULT OF GOD’S CHOICE.  
There are many persons who like to hear about God having chosen Jacob, but listen, dear Friends, to the next words in our text. “The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself.” It does not say, “unto Heaven”—“unto certain privileges”—“unto certain favors.” All that is quite true, but it does not say so here. “The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself.” Oh, what a blessed choice is this—to be chosen unto God! Then Jacob is not his own, for God has chosen him, “unto Himself.” Then Jacob does not belong to any man, for the Lord has chosen him, “unto Himself.” Now Jacob must have no motives except such as he finds in God. He must have no aims for which he is to live but that he may glorify his God, for “the Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself.” So, my Brothers and Sisters, if you are chosen by the Lord, you are chosen to be God’s child, picked out from the rest of mankind to be, from henceforth, no longer your own, or the world’s, or the devil’s, but to be God’s—and God’s alone!  
“The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself,” first, that Jacob might know Him. While others knew not God, but paid reverence unto those that were not gods, Jacob was chosen that he might, while he slept at Bethel, see the mystic ladder by which he might climb to his God—and down which God might send the angels to him. Jacob must be taught about God and Jacob’s seed must have committed unto them the oracles of God. The world lies in darkness, but there is a lamp in the house of Jacob. It is black midnight over Assyria, Babylon and Egypt, but a star shines in the heavens for Jacob and his seed! O dear Hearts, do you understand the great mysteries of which I am speaking? Do you know the Lord—the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit? Have you been taught of God? Are you among those to whom your neighbor need not say, “Know the Lord,” because you belong to the people of God who all know Him from the least even to the greatest? If so, happy, indeed, are you!  
And, next, the Lord chose Jacob and his seed that they might keep His Truth afire in the world—that God’s Revelation of Himself might be preserved by them against all comers. It is just so with Christians now—the Lord has put us in trust with the Gospel. He has committed to His servants that wonderful treasure which we have “in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” Still are we bound to earnestly “contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” And it is as much the duty of God’s people this day to guard His Truth as it was the duty of the seed of Israel to preserve, in the midst of heathen darkness, what was known of the one living and true God. “The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself” that he may preserve His Truth among the sons of men.  
It was also committed to Jacob’s descendants to keep up the worship of God. They must offer the morning and the evening lamb. They must bring the bullocks and goats and birds for sacrifice. They must set up the Tabernacle in the wilderness. They must build the Temple and there the praises of Jehovah must be sung by sweet songsters day and night. Nowhere else was God to be publicly worshipped with rites ordained by Himself except upon Mount Zion. And now, today, the pure worship of Jehovah is entrusted to His saints—nobody else can worship Him in spirit and in truth but those who have been quickened and made true by the Holy Spirit. There is no true worship of God under Heaven except that which is rendered by His own people. Men may make their ceremonies as gorgeous as they please, with splendor of architecture and great show of millinery, with the sound of flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer and all kinds of music—but, after all, there is no true worship except that which comes from hearts in which the Spirit of God dwells! So you see, dear Friends, that the maintenance of God’s worship in the world is still entrusted to His chosen.  
And the Lord has chosen His people unto Himself that He may manifest His Grace in them. “In Judah is God known: His name is great in Israel. In Salem also is His tabernacle and His dwelling place in Zion. There broke He the arrows of the bow, the shield, and the sword, and the battle.” And it is in the midst of God’s own people that His Grace is still revealed. There He breaks the arrows of sin and there He scatters all the battalions of evil. “Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shined” and still, out of the hearts of His chosen people, out of the congregation of His faithful ones, does He shine forth, for the Lord is always with those who are on His side, even with the humble hearts in which He deigns to dwell. But He is not with the ungodly, for they are far from Him by wicked works. Remember then, you who are chosen, that God has chosen you “unto Himself” that He may manifest His Grace in you.  
And, especially God has chosen His people that He may commune with them, that He may manifest Himself to them as He does not unto the world—that they may come near unto Him in Christ Jesus and that He may lay bare the very secret of His heart to them. Here is a text to prove my assertion—“The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His Covenant.” He makes His glory to pass before them and to them He reveals His choicest secrets. Happy and blessed are the people of whom this sentence is true, “The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself.”  
Now, dear Friends, let the question go round among you—Am I one of the chosen seed? You can tell whether you are chosen of God by this test—Have you been chosen unto God? Can you say with Paul, “I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus”? Are you the branded slaves of Jesus Christ and yet His free men rejoicing in the liberty wherewith He makes His people free? Do you feel as if you were shut up to one course in life, so that you can say with Paul, “This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”? Are you torn away from all former ambitions? Have you a single eye unto God’s Glory? Does your heart beat for this one objective—that you may live because Christ lives in you? Then the text describes you! “The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself.” Oh, what a thrill of delight these words may cause to pass through many, even of those who think they have known the Lord for years!  
Come, my Heart, it is all very well for your lips to have sung about God’s everlasting love, but have you been brought into communion and fellowship with Him? Do you feel and know that you are, indeed, the Lord’s? I fear that there are some who profess and call themselves Christians who live unto God in a very unsatisfactory, secondary sort of way. Like a man I have heard of who had a large farm and then took another, which he called his “off-hand farm.” And there are some professors who have their business farm, or their pleasure farm, which is the chief matter with them—and their religion is a kind of an off-hand farm and, sometimes, they think they will get a minister or a “priest” to be the bailiff, and see to it. My Friend, I give you due notice that I will be no bailiff of such a farm! And I also warn you that you will never get anything worth having unless it is your home farm and you make it the main concern of your life! God will never be put in second place—He must be everything or He will be nothing! “The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself.”  
O my dear Friend, is it so with you? Or are you still living as if there were no God, or as if God did not demand your heart’s full allegiance?  
III. Now I will pass on to notice, very briefly, in the third place, THE SEPARATION WHICH GROWS OUT OF THIS CHOICE. “The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure.”  
Then, He separates His people from the rest of mankind. Though this is not expressed in the words of the text, it is the true sense of it. And the Lord has done so. He did so with Jacob—with Israel. He made a Covenant with them and a Covenant with God always means separation from men. What a wonderful condition for a soul to be in—to be in Covenant with God and that Covenant to run on these lines—“I will never leave you nor forsake you.” “A new heart also will I give you, and a now spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you shall keep My judgments, and do them. 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 Covenant makes a clear division between the two seeds—the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent—it is one of the grandest distinctions between man and man. If you are in the Covenant, Beloved, you are on the right side of that happy and blessed line of demarcation!

Then, after the Covenant with Jacob and Israel, came the Covenant heritage which made another division, for the Lord gave the land of Canaan to the seed of Abraham and to the seed of Israel by a Covenant of salt. And God has given to His spiritual Israel a Covenant heritage—we are to possess all things in Christ, “who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption”—everything we can desire, for all things are ours if we are Christ’s. Ours is a glorious inheritance! We have everything that is necessary for this life and also for the life to come. Even Canaan had its drawbacks, but we go to a land which in very deed flows with milk and honey, where the sun goes no more down, where there is no death, neither sorrow, nor sighing, a sweet land beyond the flood, the heavenly Canaan which stands forever dressed in living green! Blessed are the eyes that can look from the top of Pisgah and “view the landscape over.” But what a difference it makes between man and man that this one has a Covenant heritage and the other has none, for he sold it for a mess of pottage, and has nothing more to do with it!  
Then came the broad distinction which all could see, namely, that of redemption, for the seed of Jacob had to be redeemed. They had come into bondage in Egypt, but with a high hand and an outstretched arm did the Lord bring them from there. Then the difference began to be visible. That night when the blood-mark was on the lintel and down the two side posts, Israel was distinct from Egypt. The blood had made the difference, for the Lord had said, “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.” O dear Hearers, have you had the blood-mark put upon you? Has the atoning Sacrifice of Christ been laid home to your heart and conscience? This is the great distinction between man and man—the blood that makes atonement for the soul! The Lord has, indeed, manifested His choice of us when we have entered into the fullness of His great redemption!  
Then came the going out of Egypt which may be likened to conversion. The passage through the Red Sea, which sets forth regeneration. The dwelling in the wilderness which is a type of the life and experience of many Believers. The passing of the Jordan and the entering into Canaan which should be a picture of the joy of all who believe in Jesus, for “we which have believed do enter into rest” and come into the land of promise. These things, which I have only mentioned in passing, made very grave distinctions between the people of Jehovah and all other nations who looked upon them as a strange race dwelling alone and not numbered among the ordinary nations of the earth.  
This brings me again to the critical question—Has the Lord made any difference between you and the rest of mankind, dear Hearers? Have you received any pledge of the Covenant of Grace? Do you know what redeeming love means? Have you been separated from the world? Have you heard the voice of God crying to you, “Come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing. And I will receive you and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty”? Is the world a wilderness to you? Have you looked to the bronze serpent and lived by the sight? Does the water from the Rock follow you—that Rock which is Christ? Do you feed on heavenly manna? Is the Lord in the midst of your camp? Is His Glory manifested there? Do you delight to be led by His fiery cloudy pillar from day to day? All this will be the manifestation of the eternal separation which God made in His predestinating purpose—“The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself.” He led Israel out into the wilderness that there He might speak to their hearts. He drew them away from men. He made them live solitary and alone, like eagles on the rock, that they might dwell there with Him and have no strange god among them. Blessed are the people who enjoy this separation! But unhappy are the men and women who talk about election and yet have never known the separation which stamps their election as being a matter of fact.  
IV. Now I close with one more characteristic of the people of God, and that is, THEIR ELEVATION. This is clearly in the text, “The Lord has chosen Jacob unto Himself.” But He elevates Jacob in a moment, for He adds, “and Israel for His peculiar treasure.”  
The “supplanter” has grown into a prevailing prince. He took his brother by the heel but now he has accomplished a grander feat than that—he has grasped the Angel and he has said, “I will not let You go, except You bless me.” He supplanted Esau, but now, as a prince, he has prevailed with God and seen Him face to face—and yet he has lived! And though he goes limping away from the wrestling, yet is he more than conqueror through Him that loved him! Yes, Beloved, God’s choice wonderfully elevates a man! He may have been Jacob, before, but he becomes Israel afterwards! Has such an elevation as that taken place in you, my Friend?  
Then see, next, that God elevated His choice in value, for He compares Jacob to a “peculiar treasure.” “Since you were precious in My sight”— oh, that is a wonderful word!—“precious in My sight,” to be used by the God who says, “The silver and the gold are Mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.” “Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you.” They are put to an honorable use, for the choicest treasures of kings, that make up their regalia, are meant to be brought out on coronation days and on other grand occasions when they bedeck themselves with all their pearls and diamonds and stars and crowns. And such are the Lord’s people, precious in His sight, “His peculiar treasure.” And they are put to this use—to adorn His doctrine in all things—to be as the jewels of His crown—to be as the signet ring upon His finger—to be as precious stones upon His breastplate! God’s people are everything to Him! There is nothing that you have, that you account rich or rare, that is anything to you in value in comparison with what God’s people are to Him! His delight is in them—the pleasure which God has in His people is truly wonderful. He made the heavens and the earth, the stars and all things that are—and then He touched the world with His wondrous finger and molded it into the thing of beauty which it is today! And it took Him six days to do it and when He had done it, what happened? “The morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy.”  
But did God sing? No, He simply said, in plain prose, that it was very good. That is all He had to say about it. Ah, but when the time comes for the new creation, when He makes a true Believer, when He forms His Church, the bride, the Lamb’s wife, we read, “He will rejoice over you with joy. He will rest in His love, He will joy over you with singing.” Think of God, the Everlasting Father, the Ever-Blessed Son, and the Divine Spirit bursting out into singing! What a song must that be! I would like to hear the singing of the angels and of all the host redeemed with blood that stand in their white robes before the Throne of the Most High. It must be such a song as mortal ears as yet have never heard. But, oh, to hear God sing—the great Father, Himself with His holy hymn—the glorious Son with His sweet Psalms—the Holy Spirit with His blessed song! We can scarcely imagine what it must be, but the expression shows how precious the Church must be to the Lord when He is said to rejoice over her with singing!  
As the love of a husband to his bride, such is the love of Christ to His people. Otherwise the Song of Solomon means nothing at all and is an idle book. As the love of a tender mother—and what can excel that?— such is the love of God to His people! Like as a mother comforts her children, even so shall the Lord God comfort you. So, then, you see, dear Friends, that the choice of God has lifted His people right up from all their former degradation and made them precious in His sight, so that He, Himself, takes delight in them.  
Go home, then, and take delight in God. If He can and delight in you, much more may you delight in Him! And, as the Psalm from which our text is taken begins with, “Praise you the Lord,” so now, you who know that you are chosen by Him, praise Him! And as the Psalm ends with, “Praise you the Lord,” you who love Him, you who have been loved by Him, continue to praise Him even till your last breath—gasp out a “Hallelujah!” as you pass into eternity!  
The Lord be with you, Beloved, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**PSALM 135.**

Verse 1. Praise you the LORD. Or, “Hallelujah.” “Hallelujah” is the keynote of it. So this is one of the Hallelujah Psalms, for so it begins. And if you look at the end, you will see that so it closes. There is, “Hallelujah,” again. The whole Psalm is shut in at the beginning and at the end with this which is both our duty and our delight! “Praise you the Lord.”

1 *.*Praise you the name of the LORD. The Character, the work, all that is revealed of God is a subject for praise. And especially that wonderful and incommunicable name, Jehovah—never mention it without praise! “Praise you the name of the Lord.”

1 *.*Praise Him, O you servants of the LORD. Make it a part of your service. Praise Him because you are His servants. Praise Him because He accepts your service. You ought to be first in sounding His praises, therefore, “Praise Him, O you servants of the Lord.”

2 *.*You that stand in the house of the LORD, in the courts of the house of our God. You are permitted to dwell near Him. You have a standing and an abode, an office and a work in the courts of the Lord’s house. Therefore take care that you begin the strain. Should not the King’s courtiers praise Him? Praise Him, then, “you that stand in the courts of the house of our God.”

3 *.*Praise the LORD; for the LORD is good. There is one excellent reason for praising Him and you can never praise Him too much. He is so good that you can never extol Him to an exaggeration.

3 *.*Sing praises unto His name; for it is pleasant. That is, singing God’s praises is pleasant—it is a pleasant duty and the Lord’s name is pleasant, or lovely. The very thought of God brings the sweetest emotions to every renewed heart. There is no pleasure in the world that exceeds that of devotion. As we sing praises unto the Lord, we shake off the cares of the world, we rise above its smoke and mists and we get, then, the clearer atmosphere of communion with Him.

4*.*For the LORD has chosen Jacob unto Himself, and Israel for His peculiar treasure. There is something for you who are the Lord’s chosen to

sing about— *“In songs of sublime adoration and praise, You pilgrims to Zion who press,  
Break forth and extol the great  
Ancient of Days, His rich and distinguishing Grace.”*

5 *.*For I know that the LORD is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. “I know it,” says the writer of the Psalm. “I know it by experience. I know it by observation. I am sure of it. There is no god like our God. He is a great Creator, a great Preserver, a great Redeemer, a great Friend, a great Helper. ‘I know that Jehovah is great, and that our Adonai is above all gods.’”

6 *.*Whatever the LORD pleased, that He did in Heaven and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places. The heathen divided out the universe into provinces—they had Jupiter to rule Heaven and earth, and Neptune for the sea, and even today many sing, but, oh, how inaccurately, “Britannia rules the waves.” It is Jehovah and no one else that rules the waves! And the people on either land or sea! He is Lord everywhere and whatever He pleases to do is done! He is no lackey to wait upon the free will of His creatures—“Whatever Jehovah pleased, that He did.”

7 *.*He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth. That is a very wonderful work! What millions of tons of water are every day turned into vapor and caused to ascend from different regions of the earth to fall, again, in cheerful, refreshing rain! What would we do if this process were suspended? It is the very life-blood of the world.

7 *.*He makes lightning for the rain. It is said that the Bible was written to teach us religion, not science. That is very true, but the Bible never makes a mistake in its science—and I would rather agree with the old writers who held that the Bible contained all science than go with those who blasphemously pretend to correct the Holy Spirit and to set Him right upon geology and I know not what besides. In the long run, it shall be proven that the old Book beats all the scientists! And when they have made some wonderful discovery, it will turn out that it was all recorded here long before. “He makes lightning for the rain.” There is an intimate connection between electricity and the formation of rain—in the East this is very clear, for we are constantly reading in books of travel of heavy downpours of rain almost always accompanied by thunderstorms.

7 *.*He brings the wind out of His treasuries. The wind never comes puffing around us according to some freak of its own, but, “He brings the wind out of His treasuries,” counting and spending it as men do their money, not suffering more wind to blow than is needed for the high purposes of His wise government. Let praise for this be given to the God of Nature who is ruling over all and always doing as He wills! The Psalmist goes on to show that the God of Nature is also the God of His people.

8 *.*Who smote the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and beast. It was God’s own hand that did it. The firstborn of man and beast could not have died by accident all over the land of Egypt at the same hour of the night! Jehovah thus punished the guilty nation. Had they not oppressed His firstborn? Had they not cruelly trampled on His people and refused to listen to His Word? And when the time came for this last and heaviest blow, the Lord did but act in justice to them, and in mercy to His people.

9 *.*Who sent tokens and wonders into the midst of you, O Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants. “Tokens and wonders”—not only prodigies which astounded the people, but, “tokens,” which taught them, for the plagues were directed against their deities—and large books might be written to show how every plague exposed the impotence of some one or other of the false gods which the Egyptians worshipped! Pharaoh and his servants were all involved in the sin, so they were all included in the punishment. How much better was it to be a servant of Jehovah than to be a servant of Pharaoh!

10. Who smote great nations and slew mighty kings. Two of them are mentioned, perhaps because they were two of the most powerful kings who blocked the road of Israel.

11-13. Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan: and gave their land for an heritage, an heritage unto Israel His people. Your name, O LORD, endures forever. He is the same Jehovah now as He ever was. Multitudes of people, nowadays, have made unto themselves new gods—they have imagined a new character for Jehovah altogether, and the God of the Old Testament is ignored and slandered. But not by His chosen people—they still cling to Him! The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob is not the God of the dead, but of the living! And that is true spiritually as well as naturally. Those who are spiritually dead refuse to acknowledge Him and set up gods that they have imagined—but those who are quickened by His Grace delight in Him and glorify His name. Let this, Beloved, be our joyful song, “Your name, O Lord, endures forever!”

13, 14. And Your memorial, O LORD, throughout all generations. For the LORD will judge His people, and He will repent Himself concerning His servants. For they have their dark times and are often in trouble through their sin. Then the Lord sends chastisement upon them, but when it has answered His purpose, He gladly enough withdraws it. How different are the idols of the heathen from our God!

15. The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands. They can do no works, for they are themselves the result of the work of men! Their handiwork can be nothing, for they are the work of men’s hands.

16-18. They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; they have ears, but they hear not; neither is there any breath in their mouths. They that make them are like unto them: so is everyone that trusts in them. The original conveys the idea that those who make such gods grow to be like them—they are continually getting to be more and more like them. They become dumb, blind, deaf, dead as they worship such idols as these.

19, 20. Bless the LORD, O house of Israel: bless the LORD, O house of Aaron: bless the LORD, O house of Levi: you that fear the LORD, bless the LORD. All of you, whether you are of the house of Aaron or of the tribe of Levi, to whatever house or tribe you belong, bless the Lord! And if you are Gentiles, even though Abraham acknowledges you not, yet, “you that fear the Lord, bless the Lord.”

21. Blessed be the LORD out of Zion, which dwells at Jerusalem. Our inmost hearts would bless Him. We cannot make Him more blessed than He is! We cannot add to His Glory, but, oh, we do wish that everything we can do, everything that can be done to His honor, may be done!

21. Praise you the LORD. That is, once again, “Hallelujah!” Oh, for the spirit of Divine Grace to set us praising God from the heart—and to keep us at that holy exercise all our days!

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A SONG, A SOLACE, A SERMON AND A SUMMONS

NO. 787

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 29, 1867, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“For His mercy endures forever.”  
Psalm 136:1.**

THIS 136th Psalm was constantly sung in the Temple by appointed singers, among whom the names of Heman and Jeduthun are mentioned. These, we are told in the Book of Chronicles, were chosen to give thanks unto Jehovah, whose “mercy endures forever.” This continued service of song was most fitting, for, if Jehovah’s mercy endures forever, our praise should endure forever! If His goodness never ceases, our thanksgiving should never be silent! It seemed to me most appropriate to direct your attention to this text in the closing Sunday of the year because it is a fit accompaniment to that upon which I addressed you on the first Sunday. [Good Cheer for the New Year, Sermon #728.]

You will remember that we then spoke of the ever watchful mercy of the Lord our God, from the words, “The eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.” Having almost reached the close of the year let us acknowledge that the mercy has been equal to the promise—that God has not failed to fulfill his gracious Word, “for His mercy endures forever.” May all your hearts be full of gratitude and the music of your spirits stand in the stead of trumpets and cymbals which of old proclaimed the joy of Israel when they made mention of Jehovah’s name!

I. At the outset we shall regard the text as A SONG. So it was originally intended to be used. It was a song for all singers, for it was the refrain of each verse, the chorus to be taken up by the whole assembled multitude. I suppose that the practiced singers commenced thus, “O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good,” and then the entire multitude, whether they were taught in psalmody or not, chanted the chorus, “For His mercy endures forever.” Then would the choir again sweetly sing, “O give thanks unto the God of gods,” and a fresh burst of many voices would reply, “For His mercy endures forever.”  
In imitation of that ancient mode of singing, I shall ask the whole assembly to make a chorus with their hearts and mentally to bless the Lord whose “mercy endures forever.” Let the young and the old join in the common praise! Let the rich and the poor, the instructed and the ignorant, yes, let the

 saved and the unsaved each take a part in the choral music, for the Psalmist so words the Psalm that even the unconverted may claim a share in it! He bids us praise God for common mercies— common as we frequently call them—and yet so priceless that when deprived of them we are ready to perish! He bids us sing concerning the great lights whose radiance is universally enjoyed. He bids us extol the Maker of the sun and the moon, for without the cheerful light of the celestial lamps we should live in perpetual darkness, if, indeed, we lived at all!

Let us bless God for the eyes with which we behold the sun, for the health and strength to walk abroad in the sunlight. Let us praise Him for the mercies which are new every morning, for the bread we eat, for the raiment which clothes us, for houses which give us shelter. Let us bless Him that we are not deprived of our reason, or stretched upon the bed of sickness. Let us praise Him that we are not cast out among the hopeless, or confined among the guilty. Let us thank Him for liberty, for friends, for family associations and comforts. Let us praise Him, in fact, for everything which we receive from His bounteous hand, for we deserve little, and yet are most plenteously endowed. “His mercy endures forever.” Every morning’s light proclaims it, the beams of every moon declare it! Every breath of air, every heaving of the lungs, every beating of the pulse are fresh witnesses that “His mercy endures forever.”

But, Beloved, the sweetest and the loudest note in the chorus must always be reserved for those who sing of redeeming love. A few verses further down the Psalmist writes, “To Him that smote Egypt in their firstborn, and brought out Israel from among them with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm, for His mercy endures forever.” Yes, God’s redeeming acts towards His chosen are forever the favorite themes of praise. Many of us know what redemption means. Let us not refuse our sonnets of thanksgiving. Glory be to God, we have been redeemed from the power of our corruptions, uplifted from the depth of sin in which we were naturally plunged! We have been led to the Cross of Christ—our shackles of guilt have been broken off—we are no longer slaves but children of the living God!

We can look back to the source of that redemption in the council chambers of eternity where the plan was first ordained and settled. We can look forward to the results of that redemption, and antedate the period when we shall be presented before the Throne of God without wrinkle or any such thing. Even now by faith we wave the palm branch and wrap ourselves about with the fair white linen which is to be our everlasting array! And shall we not this day give thanks to the name of the Lord whose redeeming “mercy endures forever”?

Child of God, can you be silent? Shall there be one dumb soul here this morning? Awake, awake, you heritors of Glory, and lead your captivity captive as you cry with David, “Bless the Lord, O my Soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name!” Further on our poet invites the experienced Believer to join in the Psalm. Just as some among us, whose voices are deep, can take the bass parts of the tune, so the educated saint who has been for years in the ways of the Lord can throw a force and a weight into the song which no other can contribute.

We are reminded in the Psalm that the Lord led His people through the wilderness and smote their enemies, “and gave their land for an heritage: for His mercy endures forever.” You who are men and fathers among us, bless the Lord who has safely led you until this hour. The pillar of cloud, the column of fire you have not seen, and yet you have been conducted as pilgrims in the desert, safe and well. The heavenly manna has been your food and the water from the living Rock has been your drink. Your mightiest foes have been slain with the sword of the Lord. Temptations sharp and strong have not prevailed against you. Trials incessant you have been able to bear.

“Up to now the Lord has helped you.” What is your experience worth if it does not kindle the flames of gratitude? To what end has God manifested all this goodness to you unless you delight yourself in God in the remembrance of it? Remember all the ways by which the Lord your God has led you these 40 years in the wilderness! Remember how He has hedged you about, and kept off your enemies and given you peace within your soul and fed you with the finest of the wheat! If you are silent you will be most guilty of all the ungrateful ones! Therefore, Believer, take the cymbals, yes, the high-sounding cymbals, and with all your might dance before the ark of the Lord your God, and praise and magnify His holy name!

The peculiar point which is brought out in this chorus is the enduring character of Divine mercy—“His mercy endures forever.” By this I suppose is intended that God’s mercy, as an attribute and as a rule of His action, is continual throughout all ages. He was a merciful God to our first parents. At the fatal portal of Eden when they were first driven forth into the world in judgment, the sweet promise came like the breath of Heaven upon them, “The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head.” Abraham and Isaac and Jacob received mercy at His hands. Samuel and David and Solomon found Him gracious, and the Prophets and those who loved the Lord in their days knew that He turned not His love from His people. The multitude understood the abounding mercy of the Most High when healing was given by our Lord on the right hand and on the left.

In Apostolic times the first champions of the faith drank deep at the fountain of God’s love, and afterwards our sires, who upheld the banner of the Cross in ages of persecution, trusted in God and bore witness that His mercy endured unto them. It is the same today! God has not quenched the lamp of His goodness—the river of His mercy flows deep and broad as before. I was musing upon this—God’s mercy through the ages—and I saw as before my eyes the goodness of God conquering the sin of many all along the ages.

Did you ever stand upon the field of Waterloo and see the golden harvest waving there? So you have seen how the mercy of God has blotted out the cruelty of man. There where man struggled with his fellow and dyed the ground crimson with human gore—Mercy came and covered all with a robe of emerald, covered with fairest flowers, turning Aceldama into Eden! Moreover, Mercy so triumphs over Judgment that before long men look upon the judgments as a noble form of mercy! When our ancient city was consumed by fire and the distressed inhabitants walked among the ashes of all their precious things, the pulpits rang with the cry of the judgment of God.

But what do we say now? Why, that it was a most gracious visitation— destroying pestilence in its lair, and banishing the plague from the land! Thus it is seen that “His mercy endures forever.” If Jehovah shall shake the earth with earthquakes, or dash down the dwellings of men with tornadoes, or make the cruel sea to engulf a navy, the after results teem with blessings to mankind! While the judgment itself vanishes, flowers bloom amid the rifts of the earthquakes, and children play where the hot lava ran from the red lips of the volcano! Mercy still abides, and judgment is but for a little season.

Doubtless, also, the Psalmist meant that mercy continues in its fullness. We make great draughts upon the mercy of God, but we do not diminish it. There are fears that we shall one day exhaust those great storehouses in which the earth’s best fuel is laid up. This may be probable, and is certainly possible—a few hundred years will make a heavy demand upon our mineral treasuries—but quarry as you will in the mines of God’s blessing, neither you nor your children, nor your children’s children shall complain of a deficiency!—

*“Great God, the treasures of Your love  
Are everlasting mines,  
Deep as our helpless miseries are,  
And boundless as our sins.”*

May we not also understand by, “His mercy endures forever,” that the patience of God abounds? Have you ever reflected upon the infinite, longsuffering of God? Consider, for a moment, the sins of men are all before the Lord. You and I can readily put up with offenses which do not touch us in the quick, or actually under our own eye—but the sinner’s sin is perpetrated before the countenance of Jehovah! No word is said behind His back. No blasphemy is uttered in secret to Him—and sin affects God as it does not affect us. We have grown so hardened that the heinousness of iniquity is little discerned by us—we take it as a matter of course.

But God, who is infinitely pure, is, if I may use such an expression, infinitely sensitive in regard to sin. He knows sin to be sin and the heinousness of it, which we do not perceive, is all before His mind continually. And yet His mighty patience reigns over all and bears with men’s iniquities. Remember, too, that these insults against Heaven are constantly repeated. The most patient man at last yields to anger. Constant dripping will wear away a stone. But here is God insulted, as I have said, to His face thousands and thousands of times a day, and yet keeps His sword in its scabbard and bids His thunder sleep!

A wish would blast the rebels into everlasting torment, but He wills it not. As the Lord lives He says He has no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but would rather that he should turn unto Him and live. To all this you must add the reflection that all the while rebellious sinners are partaking of God’s mercy—the rebel wears God’s gifts of clothes upon His back, and sits at the table of God’s Providence. The breath that is in his nostrils is the gift of Divine charity and yet the wretch uses this breath against his Maker! Can you understand this? Could you bear to be insulted for a single day by one who was receiving all he had from you? Would you not, by-and-by, yes, very speedily, say to him, “Get out of here! If you are my enemy, why should I treat you as I treat my friend?”

Then be it remembered that God is not only sparing the guilty, but is putting ways of mercy before them. Some of you are invited to repent as often as the Sunday dawns! With some of you there are incessant movings upon your conscience—you seldom pass a day without hearing the voice say, “Turn you, turn you, why will you die?” God is always wooing you to come to Him, inviting you by His mercy and threatening you by His judgments. And yet while His long-suffering should lead you to repentance, you add sin to sin and ripen in your iniquity!

One thing more I would have you remember and I think you will admire the amazing patience of God, namely that He is doing this with millions! Millions! Perhaps a thousand millions at this moment, for I suppose— though no one can ascertain accurately—there are a thousand millions of unregenerate men upon the face of this earth at this very moment—all enemies of God! They are either worshipping gods of wood and stone or else such spiritual idols as their imaginations have fashioned. And with all these God is compassed about as with bees but He does not destroy them! He still has patience, and still He cries, “Come unto Me! Repent! Believe in My Son and you shall have eternal life.” Truly “His mercy endures forever,” if you think upon these things.

May not the endurance of Divine Grace be faintly pictured in the following scene? Out yonder, just beyond those grinding rocks, there is a vessel rolling and tossing on the jagged granite, and evidently going to pieces. See you not the mariners clinging to the masts? It is not possible that they should escape except by help from the shore. The rocket apparatus has been used and a rope is fastened to the vessel—and now a cradle is drawn along the rope. What joy! One man is safely landed, but the rope is weak, and it is doubtful whether it will bear the strain. Two at one time are clinging to the rope and the ship is nearly broken up—will the rope bear them?

The wind howls terribly and the waves lash furiously—will the rope hold out? Another is venturing! Ah, see how the rope dips! The waves have gone over him. Will it be able to sustain his weight and save him? Now we never have such anxiety concerning the salvation of souls by Christ Jesus, “for His mercy endures forever.” The salvation of God brings every soul to shore that hangs on it, and, when the world is gone to wreck, Free Grace will bring all who trust it to the eternal shore! Should the biggest sinner out of Hell hang upon that rope of mercy, it will bear him up and bring him safely to land!

I would liken God’s mercy to a great temple which strong men have sought to overturn with their utmost might. They have labored to overturn the two great pillars where the house leans. The ancient temple of the Philistines stood firm enough till an unexpected hero entered it—Samson felt for the pillars, and finding them, bowed himself with all his might— and the pillars snapped! And down came the house upon the Philistine lords, and Samson himself perished. Many a Samson-like sinner has gone into the temple of God’s mercy and bowed with all his might to overturn it—to see if he could not wear out the patience of God and blaspheme himself into swift damnation—and yet these bold and gigantic sinners have never been able to do this! And very frequently these very men have been subdued by Divine Grace and have worshipped Him in the temple which they once sought to destroy. Yes, Philistia’s house may bow, but the house of Jehovah stands fast, and “His mercy endures forever.”

There is but one reflection to make the subject of the song complete, namely that the potency of God’s mercy in delivering His saints is equally immutable. He is always able to deliver His children, so that we may say in the language of the three holy children, “Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us out of the enemies’ hands.” There is no possibility that a child of God should be cast into a difficulty out of which the stretched out arm of Jehovah cannot bring him. He who brought His people of old from the brick kilns of Egypt, and led them through the Red Sea and the howling wilderness will surely bring all His elect ones out of all their trials safely to their heavenly rest.

II. I now use the text as A SOLACE. We have many troubles and we need comfort. God is willing that we should be comforted, for He says, “Comfort you, comfort you My people.” Moreover, He has provided for it, for He has given us the Holy Spirit to be the Comforter. I shall use the text as a solace as to the past. The year is all but gone. Have we not found, up till now, that His mercy has endured forever? If the stories of all could be told who are sitting here, I suppose a great roll of lamentation would need to be written, and around every roll we could bind the silken cord of mercy!

Beloved, whether you will say it or not, I must, as the minister of such a congregation as this—involved in so many cares, with so many labors and so much of anxiety pressing daily upon my soul—I must bless my God that up till now, to me, at any rate, His mercy has endured. It brought me to tears when you were singing just now*—*

*“He His chosen race did bless*

*In the wasteful wilderness.”*  
Yes, it is a wasteful wilderness to us—but He has blessed us—He has made it blossom like the rose where we expected nothing but weariness and barrenness. Blessed be God for the past! We will comfort ourselves with recollections of the past because He will not change in His dealings. He that has helped us thus far will not forsake us. “Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings will I rejoice.”

But the chief solace about the past lies in this—every right-minded Christian at the close of the year looks back upon his sins of omission and sins of commission. I shall not invite you to any lengthy confessions this morning, but which of us would not blush scarlet if his sins could be known? Beloved, acknowledge them now into the ear of your God and then remember that mercy covers all. Whatever it may have been, mercy covers all, and, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.”

I am no more a sinner than I was at the end of last year, and yet I have committed thousands of sins. There is no more in God’s book against me than there was then—there was nothing then, blessed be His name!—for the blood had cancelled all. There is nothing now, for the same atoning sacrifice has taken all my sin away. Come to the Cross, my Brothers and Sisters! Come to the Cross again, and as you look up to the wounds of Jesus which bled for you, believe that “His mercy endures forever.” Your sins, however innumerable, are cast behind His back, yes, thrown into the depths of the sea.

Our text is also a very sweet consolation as to the present. Have we, at this moment, a sense of present sin? Then, “His mercy endures forever.” Our Lord comes to us, in the language of this text, girt with the towel and bearing the ewer, and the basin, and washes our feet yet again. From the accumulated dust of a year’s journey He cleanses us! May you have no consciousness of sin, but on the contrary, a consciousness of reconciliation in the Beloved. But perhaps you have on your mind some spiritual disability. Perhaps you have been so disquieted at home that you cannot concentrate your thoughts, and however the preacher may try to bring you to the point, your mind is so disturbed that you cannot appreciate it.

There is a fog in your soul as well as in the streets. Beloved, thank God our acceptance is not injured by our depressed state of mind! Whether we are depressed or exalted, whether we are enjoying communion or not, we still stand in the Beloved all fair and glorious in the sight of Him whose mercy endures forever! Possibly you have come here today and brought with you too much of yesterday’s troubles. These ought not to come into the Sunday, for this is a day of rest. Still you cannot help it—you are beset with such daily anxiety that while sitting here you have been mentally looking into your ledger, or nursing the sick child. Your mind has been in the fields of vanity when it should have been on the mountain with God. Drive out your cares by remembering that “His mercy endures forever!”—

*“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 cannot be in such a difficulty that He cannot sustain you in it, or bear you out of it. “His mercy endures forever.”

As to the future. Ah, we are poor fools when we begin to deal with the future! It is a sea which we are not called upon to navigate. The present is the whole of life, for when we enter into the future it is the present! Yet, standing here this morning, I can conceive some who feel infirmities creeping over them, trembling with the foreboding, “What shall I do when I come to extreme old age? My friends are gone. I have none who are likely to maintain me. When these fingers cannot perform their daily work. When my brow is wrinkled and I can scarcely totter to my toil, what shall I do?” Ah, “His mercy endures forever.”

It does not stop at 70, nor pause at 80—it will bear you safely over 90— if your pilgrimage is so far prolonged. When I looked the other day upon a number of poor old men and women in the wards of the workhouse, some of whom had not risen from their beds at all for years, I thought to myself it was far better to die than so to live. And yet, if they had a good hope, I was mistaken, for if Christ should make that bed to become soft as downy pillows with His Presence, there might be a Glory in the workhouse, and a Heaven in the midst of poverty and they would there learn as well as anywhere, that “His mercy endures forever!” “Even to your old age I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry and will deliver you.” Therefore trust in the Lord, and be not afraid, you whose days of weakness are coming, for He will not fail you nor forsake you.

We are sometimes alarmed at the prospect of the storms of life. They are not few. In the past they have been many—we may expect more. He who reckons upon smooth weather between this and the Fair Haven, reckons without his head! But, Beloved, come what tempest there may, “His mercy endures forever.” There must have been some trepidation on board that mail steamer a few weeks ago when the tornado was thundering over the West Indies. The captain very wisely put on all steam and faced the wind—but with what anxiety must they have asked the question—“Will she have force enough to face such a mighty whirlwind? Can the engines keep up speed enough to battle with the hurricane?”

The engines groaned and every timber creaked as the good ship steamed right into the teeth of the tempest, sailing, as it were, between the very jaws of death and into the throat of the grave. Surely they whispered to one another, “Will she brave it out? She seems but a mere cockleshell in the midst of these huge Atlantic waves! Will she be carried on the reef and dashed to pieces as hundreds of others have been, or will she conquer the furious blast?” When the good vessel kept her head to the wind and pierced the waves, holding her own against such odds, there must have been great joy on board! You and I are in a nobler vessel! With her head to the tempest Jehovah steers her! And we shall not only outlive the storm, but sail into port with all our colors flying to the praise and glory of His name whose “mercy endures forever!”

Looking forward to the future, there are some who say, “We are most of all alarmed because of far travels which we are expecting.” Out of this congregation a considerable number emigrate from year to year, called to a distance from friends and kinsfolk. Should that be your case, dear Friend, is it not a comfort to think that God’s mercy endures forever? Two friends agree never to go farther apart than they can communicate with one another by telegraph. One of them has crossed the Atlantic, and resides in the United States or in the far west, but still he has only to go to the office where a wire can be touched and a message will flash to his friend in England and tell him his needs.

This is just the compact God has made with His people! They shall never go where there is not a telegraphic communication between them and Himself. You may be out at sea, or in Australia, but the communication of prayer is always open between your soul and God! And if you are commanded to ride on the wings of the morning to the uttermost parts of the sea, or if for awhile you have to make your bed in the abyss—if you are His child, still will you be able to reach His heart! Neither distance, nor time, nor eternity itself, shall divide an heir of Heaven from the mercy of God which endures forever!

I think I hear one say, “I am not looking forward to that, for I have no doubt I shall lay my bones among my brethren. But I have lost many friends and others are pining with consumption, and are likely to be taken from me.” This is a grief which occurs more often to us as we grow older. The young man may look upon his wife and children and see his father, and mother, and friends about him—but as sure as we are men, either we must go from them or they from us—for no unbroken families can long remain on earth. And the less of death we have had the more is yet to come. We are those who have not drunk the cup, but we must and will drink it even to the dregs. What a comfort to know that we sorrow not as they that are without hope! If we lose our friends and dear ones in the Lord, we part to meet, and we meet to part no more. If they die—if our best beloved ones depart—yet “the Lord’s mercy endures forever.”

And this year some of us will die. As I look around here I feel that truth most solemnly. The young may die. The old must. Some of us must tread the dark valley this year. It may be the preacher—there are many more unlikely things. It may be you—you young people. It may be any of us. Do we know the mercy of God? Then God forbid we should lift our little finger to have it otherwise, for His mercy will endure when the death dews lie cold on our brow! We shall find that last day to be no more dreadful than the ordinary days of life. Yes, we shall perhaps be favored with such visions of angels and such sights of the better land that we shall be glad for evening, to undress that we may rest with God!

III. I wish we had time to use the text more fully in that light, but we have not. Therefore, I shall come, now, in the third place, and with much brevity, to use the text as A SERMON—a sermon with three heads.

1. “His mercy endures forever.” Then, in the first place, let our mercy endure. Have you, during this year, or at any time previously, offended another or been offended so that there is any ill-will in your mind between you and anyone? Then may I entreat you, as this is a most fitting day, at the close of the year, to end it at once! Even if we feel we have been grossly ill-treated, grossly insulted, yet now let the token of reconciliation be given by every one of us. Remember, you Christians must do it or you are not Christians. You are nothing better than deceitful hypocrites if you harbor in your minds a single unforgiving thought.

There are some sins which may be in the heart, and yet you may be saved—but you cannot be saved unless you are forgiving. “If you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” Those are Christ’s own words. If we do not choose to forgive, we choose to be damned! Now, there is a good deal of lying about this. People will say, “Yes, I will forgive it, but I cannot forget it.” You mean you do not forgive it! Everything like enmity must be renounced if you would be saved.

When Mr. Wesley was going out to America with General Ogilvie, he heard a great storming and raging going on in the cabin. It was the general scolding his servant. He said, “I had so many bottles of Cypress wine put on board for me—the only wine I am allowed to drink—and that villain has drunk it all himself. I have put him in irons, and I am going to send him on board a man-of-war to be flogged, for I never forgive.” “Well,” said Mr. Wesley, “I hope you never sin.” The inference was so irresistible that the general said, “Here, Sir, take my keys. I forgive you this time.” If we would be forgiven, let us forgive.

2. The second head of the sermon is this—if God’s mercy endures forever, then let us learn the duty of hoping for everybody. You have no right to say of the poor fallen girl in the street, “Oh, it is no use looking after those outcasts, they always turn out badly before long.” God’s mercy endures forever! If you had any of it, you would not talk so! You have no right to say of the drunken man who has been reclaimed three or four times, but has gone back, “It is no use trying any more with him.” Brothers and Sisters, “His mercy endures forever.” Would you be more severe than your Maker? He bears with sinners—surely we may!

Especially this ought to be so with our relatives and children. A mother’s love must never burn out, and a father’s patience never expire. Hope for the most hopeless. Till they are in Hell pray for them. Till they are in their graves, hope for them. Till they die, labor to bring them to Christ. God’s mercy endures forever—let our tenderness endure.

3. And, in the third place, if God’s mercy endures forever, then see the duty of hoping for yourself. If you have been ever so guilty, do not say, “There is no hope.” “His mercy endures forever.” Away with that whisper of Satan, “Too late.” It is NOT too late. So long as you desire Christ, it is not too late for Him to receive you. It will, one day, be too late, when life is over. Then will you hear those words, “Too late! You cannot enter now!” But it is not too late for repentance and faith to be accepted. Despair is sin—hope is the duty of man with regard to God. I pray you cast not yourself away. Till God has cast you into Hell, have hope, and come to Christ.

IV. I cannot say more upon the sermon, time is gone. The last head is A SUMMONS: “His mercy endures forever.” Is not that a most loving and tender summons to the wandering child to return to his Father? To the backsliding professor to approach his God? To the chief of sinners to humble himself before the Mercy Seat? There is mercy—seek it! There is mercy in Jesus—believe in Him! Bunyan tells us that Prince Emmanuel hung out the white flag upon Mount Gracious. It is still there! Surrender, Man! Surrender today, and fight no more against yourself and your eternal interests. Behold the white flag! You have but to trust your Lord, and leave your sin, and He will be merciful to you.

When that man of God, Mr. Andrew Fuller, was once preaching in Scotland, the place was very crowded and numbers were outside. A woman, the worst woman in the town, seeing the crowd, thought she would push into the Kirk to listen to the English minister. He was preaching from the text, “Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” “Ah,” said she, “I have gone far, but I have not gone over the ends of the earth, at any rate, and if God says, ‘Look, and be saved, all the ends of the earth,’ He must mean me.” She did look, and became afterwards an honorable woman in that parish, converted by the Grace of God!

On this last Sunday morning in the year, I solemnly present those same words as fresh from God’s lips to every unconverted person here, “Look unto Christ, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are as scarlet they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” May God bring you to obey that gentle summons to come to your heavenly Father and live!

Believers, the summons is also meant for you. It says this, “His mercy endures forever,” therefore let your love to souls continue! Let your labor for conversions abide! Let your generosity to God’s cause abound! Let your endeavors to extend the kingdom of Christ endure evermore! At this season, let me say, enlarge your exertions! If you have done much, do more! If you have done little, be ashamed and begin afresh!

If God’s mercy continue forever, do not let us talk about resting and taking things easy! No, time is very precious, every hour has six wings, like a cherub, and flies like the lightning’s flash. Let us live and work while we may, “for the night comes when no man can work.”

END VOLUME 13 Sermon #1285 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

SIHON AND OG, OR MERCIES IN DETAIL  
NO. 1285

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

***“To Him which smote great kings: for His mercy endures forever: and slew famous kings: for His mercy endures forever: Sihon king of the Amorites: for His mercy endures forever: and Og the king of Bashan: for His mercy endures forever: and***

***gave their land for a heritage: for His mercy endures forever: even a heritage unto Israel His servant: for His mercy endures forever.” Psalm 136:17-22.***

THESE six verses iterate and reiterate the same fact. They rehearse and repeat the same reflection. Is the tautology tedious? Do the chimes weary you with their monotony? No. And this is a veritable charm in poetry. When the poet touches upon some important theme which illuminates his soul and kindles his nobler passions to a flame, he is very apt to dwell upon it with enthusiasm, inclined to pursue it with eagerness, to follow it up with feeling and echo it over and over again with strong and yet stronger emotion. Nobody feels that repetition is out of place in poetry, because in weal or woe, with pleasure or with pathos, we dwell on the theme which awakens our sympathy.

This Psalm, of which the refrain is always the same—“His mercy endures forever,” has in it several instances of this repetition. “To Him that made great lights,” is followed by, “The sun to rule by day,” and by the next, “The moon and stars to rule by night: for His mercy endures forever.” The repetition is natural and secures attention. The words are musical as they strike on our ears and the style is not only allowable, but acceptable as a beautiful license of the poetic school. For my part, I like a repetition in the tune of a Psalm as well as in its language. There has sprung up a fashion in music, now, to quibble at repeats. I must confess, I do not feel of the same mind as some who, when the Psalm or hymn is given out, seem to say, “Now, let us go through it as quickly as ever we can, from beginning to end.”

I prefer to chew some of the words—to have them come over again—to get the flavor of them in my mouth, or rather, in my soul. For instance, an old tune like the one we have sung is none the worse because it gives us the repeat of “His loving kindness.” Such a word as that you would like to keep on repeating, if it were necessary, a dozen times—

*“His loving kindness,  
His loving kindness,  
Oh, how good!”*

A repeat ought to be considered a beauty rather than a blemish in music. There is, moreover, a reason for every repetition in Scripture, for we may say of the ornaments of poetry, when we find them in the sacred Volume, that they are never mere ornaments. The repetitions, though elegant, are not merely flowers of rhetoric—they have a design. The Holy Spirit dwells upon a theme because He has an intention in doing so.

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

I. And, first, IT IS WELL TO DELIBERATE LONG OVER THE MERCIFUL SIDE OF GOD’S JUDGMENTS. One does not always see mercy in, He “slew mighty kings: for His mercy endures forever: and smote famous kings: for His mercy endures forever.” It would have read more naturally if He had said, “Who smote mighty kings: for His justice endures forever: and slew famous kings: for His vengeance endures forever.” The point to be brought out, however, was that there was mercy in these judgments. The Holy Spirit would have us know that there is mercy abroad in the

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

The removal from the earth of these great oppressive kings, though it was terrible for them, was a great blessing! When tyrants die, nations have time to breathe. When great oppressors are cut off, it is as when a lion falls, or as when wolves are slain and the deer and sheep have time to rest. Who knows how often, in answer to the tear of the slave, God has been pleased to smite his tyrant master? Mercy, herself, had brushed the tear from her eye, and said, “Smite, O God!” Sometimes when we have read stories of oppression and tyranny, wrong and violence, the gentlest among us, who would not have hurt a hair of a man’s head, have been the very first to express indignation and to marvel that God kept back the thunderbolt—that He did not pour vengeance on the adversary and deliver the injured and down-trodden.

If you read all through history and see how dynasties have crumbled and empires have melted away—could you but discern the secret history of the nations and how much there was of robbery and oppression, injustice and cruelty—you would understand that when emperor after emperor was slain in battle, or overtaken by sudden death, and king after king was swept from the throne, it was because God’s mercy endures forever! It was not mercy to the one man, perhaps—to Nero, Caligula, Tiberius, or the like—but was it not mercy to the millions who had grown weary of their abominable rule? The sufferings of the helpless cried to God for redress. The moans and tears of serfs, vassals, prisoners and captives presented their wretchedness before Him—till His mercy linked hands with His wrath and He slew great and famous kings because His mercy endures forever!

Read the pages of history, I say, with this sentiment in your mind, and you will often judge that what seemed to be a very severe retribution upon some man of eminence may turn out, after all, only to have been an act of mercy towards those who were under his power. Apply the thought another way. There are huge systems of power in the world and such there always have been—systems like Sihon, king of the Amorites, whose force and fame have held vast hordes and populations in terror. And the defenses of these systems have been strong as the walled cities of Og, king of Bashan. But since the day when Christ came into the world and gathered His 12 Apostles around Him, how many of these systems have been utterly destroyed?

Ask, at this moment, where are the gods that were worshipped when Paul entered Athens and preached Jesus and the Resurrection? Where are all the gods that held sway over Greece and Rome when Peter and the rest of the fishermen were telling of our Lord Jesus Christ and the propitiation that He made for sin? They have passed away and they are not! And, since then, there have risen up great systems and schools of thought—in which human wisdom has opposed the Divine wisdom. Strong and mighty systems they have been, but the student of history knows how they have all passed away, one after the other.

And in our own land there has passed away—I pray God never to return—the system of Popery more terrible than Sihon, king of the Amorites, or Og, king of Bashan! And now their ruined abbeys are scattered all over the land—ruins which make our souls rejoice as we look upon them, for we say, “Come, behold the works of the Lord! What desolation He has made in the earth.” And here is another instance of how He can put His foes to flight. At this day there are other systems still standing, crushing down the people, darkening the night of Nature with a denser darkness of superstition—turning a midnight of human depravity into a darkness that might be felt as in the plague of Egypt of old.

But, as the Lord lives, as He has scattered falsehoods one after the other, so will He scatter all these systems! And the day shall come when we shall say, “Mohammed’s crescent is forgotten now, for His mercy endures forever; and the pomp of anti-Christ has passed away and all his ‘infallibility’; for the mercy of the Lord endures forever.” One great error after another is brought down by the strong hand of the God of Jacob, for His mercy endures forever! And though, in each case, these things seem like judgments upon the people, yet are they judgments full of mercy, for it is a blessing when God smites any system which is contrary to Himself and to His Truth, contrary to His Son, contrary to the liberties and the rights of man and, above all, contrary to the Gospel life and the holy purity of the Church.

Now, Brothers and Sisters, there are other judgments yet to come— judgments which we, surely, are to look forward to with great hope as instances of the mercy of God. The day is coming when he who is more terrible than Sihon, king of the Amorites, shall be cast out. Christ, by His death, has broken the power of Satan, but Satan still holds sway, to a great extent, over the sons of men. As the Gospel spreads, his power shall lessen and, by-and-by, there shall come the time when he shall be cast into the Lake of Fire and his power shall cease. It will be a judgment

upon him. But what an illustration it will be of how God’s mercy endures forever! Then shall Satan lift “his brazen front with thunder scarred,” receive his sentence and begin anew his Hell—and in that day the saints shall sing ,“His mercy endures forever!”

And death, too, that terrible thing, that, also, is to be destroyed. It is the last enemy, but it is the last enemy that shall be destroyed. And when death, itself, shall cease to be, and the sepulcher shall be rifled of all its treasures, then shall we magnify and bless the Lord as Israel did when they thought of Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, for His mercy endures forever! And when that last tremendous act of vengeance shall come and death and Hell shall be cast into the Lake of Fire and all the hosts of evil—even all that have done iniquity and have rejected Christ, shall be cast out forever from all hope and joy—in that dread day, while it shall be, to them, weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, it shall be to the righteous, “Hallelujah! Hallelujah! For God and goodness, the right and the Christ have triumphed forever.”

Yes, even in the condemnation of the lost, it shall be a token of mercy to the universe that sin was not permitted to triumph, that evil was not allowed to have its sway, but that God overcame it at a mighty cost and, at last, shut it up within its proper bound, never to break forth again, for, “His mercy endures forever.” We know not, Brethren, what may happen to ourselves, but we know what has happened and, in the light of the Truth of God I am now dwelling upon, we may now sing unto the Lord a new song! We have had our smiting and we have had our slayings. We have had sins within us slain that were mighty kings and we have had corruptions that were famous kings, but they have been brought down!

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

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

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

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

Why should they thus come in detail? Because every mercy we have received is undeserved. The Israelites did not deserve that God should smite Sihon, king of the Amorites, or Og, king of Bashan. It was a mercy so rich and gracious that it deserved to be recorded! In that very chapter, from which I read to you just now, where God smote Sihon, you will find that the children of Israel murmured, so that God sent fiery serpents among them. In that same chapter we have the record of His chastening them with fiery serpents and yet He is giving them victory over their foes! Oh, it brings tears into our eyes and fills us with humiliation when we remember that many of our choicest mercies have come to us just after our very blackest sins!

It is not that the Lord gives us His mercy when we are walking consistently—when we are obedient, when we are what we ought to be. There would be great Grace in that, but the crowning mercy is that when we have gone out of the way—when we have gone down By-Path Meadow, when, like Peter, we have denied our Master—yet still some great mercy has been given to set us right again! Sihon, king of the Amorites, just when we had provoked the Lord, has come down upon us to destroy us. But the Lord has said, “No, I will smite My children, but I will not let you smite them. I will chasten them and send fiery serpents, but, Sihon, you must not touch them. Get back! If you dare lay a finger upon them, My jealousy shall burn and smoke against you, for they are My children and I will deliver them in the day of their afflictions.” Oh, bless the Lord for each mercy because it has been so undeserved!

Nor have we received a mercy that we could have dispensed with. Had God smitten Sihon, king of the Amorites, and then when Og came against them had said, “I have done enough for you and I will do no more,” the nation would have been destroyed! No, Sihon, king of the Amorites, is no more. Bless the Lord for that. Yet if the Lord does not smite Og, king of Bashan, what will become of Israel? Thus each mercy is needed—why, then, should not each mercy have a separate song? When you are in present trouble, you think much of the present mercy.

My dear Brothers and Sisters, when you have got through the trouble, why not think a great deal of the mercy afterwards? Then as it comes, a brand new mercy in a fresh dilemma, the more you need it, the more store you set by it. Why not set the same store by these mercies after you have received them and commemorate, in particular, the benefits which flow

out of each? Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan shall be sung of, each one separately, because neither victory could be dispensed with. They were both necessary that Israel might enter into the promised land.

Moreover, there was a peculiarity about each mercy. This was sure to be the case. You never had two mercies from God that were quite alike. There were some special circumstances which made a marked difference. Pluck the leaves from a tree—commonly speaking, they are alike, yet there are no two leaves veined exactly in the same manner. So, too, with mercies. There is some distinction if you look narrowly into them. Generally, when we are in deep waters, there is some peculiar feature to distinguish the trial and to identify it afterwards. I know that Monday’s mercy will not do for Tuesday and I should be sorry if I had nothing but Tuesday’s mercy to help me through Wednesday. His mercies “are new every morning: great is His faithfulness.”

Now, since they are all new, and each one separate, why could not each one be spoken of by itself? As God paints so many fresh pictures, why should we not set them in appropriate frames, saying of each one, “His mercy endures forever”? There is a specialty about each. Sihon is not Og and Og is not Sihon. Well may my text assign to each one its place in the song of praise! But if any mercy deserves to be rehearsed more distinctly than another, it is early mercy. The children of Israel had not got their hands into fighting yet. They had not crossed the Jordan. They had not entered Canaan where they were to be soldiers everyday.

They were on this side of the Jordan and they had not learned war. They offered to Sihon and to Og to go quietly through their land and not so much as pluck a fruit from their trees, or drink a drop of water from their wells. But Sihon and Og were in an ill state of mind and they would not allow them to go peaceably through. There was a battle—the first of their battles—the commencement of their warfare and so they always looked back with happy and grateful memories to their first fights and their first victories. No doubt they remembered all about Adonibezek and about the king of Ai and all those other kings. But these were later—their first fights were with Sihon and Og.

Oh, my dear Brothers and Sisters, I should like you to recall your first troubles—your first labors for Christ, your first trials and your first successes! You remember the first soul that you brought to Jesus—you cannot forget the little room where you began to work. You remember the half-dozen girls that you collected for the first time to form a class—those two or three boys that you got into that little room down in the back slum. Now, remember your Sihon, king of the Amorites and your Og, king of Bashan and how God helped you over those beginnings! It was a great thing, you know, for you were not so big, then, as you are now.

You begin to think (I am only saying out loud what your heart whispers to you)—you begin to think that you can do it. Why, you are a man of experience, are you not? And you, young man, why, you are a well developed minister now! You can do a great deal. We too often feel as if our experience had matured us into something far more important than we dreamed of in the first stage of our little career. It is a wicked feeling, but the vanity of our hearts will sometimes assert itself. Let us revert to the time when we were little in Israel and all unknown! Some of us were, perhaps, quite boys and girls, though we truly loved our Lord. We were weak and feeble. Nobody thought there was anything in us, or, if they did, we ourselves did not think so.

We were all trembling and afraid. But, glory be to God, we overcame Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, the king of Bashan, and our early victories are fresh in our memories! Let us recall them, partly to humble us and partly to strengthen us. Let us, like David, say, “Your servant slew both the lion and the bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them.” The Lord who helped those young days will not forsake you now. Only trust Him with the same simplicity. Only distrust yourself as much as you did, then, and a little more. Only sink into the very dust of self-abasement and rise in all the grandeur of childlike confidence in God—and as He smote Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, so will He make all your foes as driven stubble before your face.

He will make you as a new, sharp threshing instrument, having teeth and you shall thresh the mountains and make them as chaff. Thus each mercy deserves to be specially remembered, for not one is deserved, not one is needless and every one has its peculiarity—but especially the early ones—they have a never-to-be-forgotten specialty.

III. Thirdly, EACH MERCY DOES REALLY, IN ITSELF, DESERVE SEPARATE CONTEMPLATION. I will show you exactly why I think so. I go to visit a sick person. He has been in trouble. Let me suppose it is yourself who makes the visit, for I dare say you have done the same thing. Very soon after you enter you get an account of the trouble in pretty full details and then you have all the special circumstances related to you. “You see, my dear Sir, I should not have felt the loss of this dear child so much, only it is the second or the third I have lost. And then, you see, Sir, she was such a sweet girl.” Or, “It was that dear boy upon whom I had set all my hopes.”

These little points are always mentioned as occasions of special grief or aggravations of a heavy sorrow. “My dear husband is taken away,” says the disconsolate widow. And, unwilling to mingle her tears indiscriminately with other weepers in like afflictions, she adds, “Ah, Sir, but in my widowhood there are pangs peculiarly bitter. Just after he had been toiling and struggling, with the tide against him, and we were beginning to get on more smoothly, he was taken away with a sudden stroke or a slow consumption before there was a proper provision made for these dear children. When they seemed to need a father’s care and tenderness, it was then, just then, he was smitten, and I am left with a heart withered like grass.”

Then you meet another who has lost money and you hear of the failure that is likely to come on. And then there are certain details about the loss—about the person that was trusted—certain circumstances about the cruel manner in which he acted and the shameful way in which he betrayed confidences. You hear all that. Oh, I know all about it! I have heard it and, moreover, when I have got some trouble of my own, I think I generally find myself turning it inside out, like a child does a new dress, saying, “Look here,” and showing every bit of it—every point of it—upside down, the right way up, the wrong side up and the wrong side out and all ways! You always do that, do you not, with all your troubles?

Now then, dear Friends, ought you not to do the same with all your mercies? Do you not think so? If the Lord gave you nothing but troubles, then, I think, there might be some justification in dwelling so much upon them. But since there are so many mercies, would not it be wisdom to tell your friends, sometimes, all about those mercies with a sparkling eye and say, “They were manifold mercies. There was fold upon fold. See the goodness of the Lord in this thing. He sent that mercy just when I needed it— just when I most required it—and it came to me in such a beautiful way, too, and it was delivered to me by the very person that made it most acceptable. The way in which the gift was bestowed so sweetened it that I do not know how to praise the Lord enough for it.”

Oh, if only I heard Christians often saying one to another, “Have you heard what the Lord has done for me? Sit down a little while and let me fill your ears with the sweet tale of His loving kindnesses and His tender mercies.” Is not this justice? Bare justice? If you will harp on your sorrows, you should, in a better sense, harp on your joys and bring out the best harp with all its ten strings—and touch all those strings with praise to Him who has done so much for you! Tell the world not only that He overcame your foes, but say, “To Him which smote great kings: for His mercy endures forever: and slew famous kings: for His mercy endures forever: Sihon king of the Amorites, for His mercy endures forever: and Og the king of Bashan: for His mercy endures forever.”

“We might tire people,” says one. I am glad you are a little sensitive on that point, because you have been rather inconsiderate, sometimes, when you have been talking about your troubles. And I think you might be excused if you were to weary us occasionally by declaring your mercies! Oh, but the ears of saints are not tired with such themes as this! On the contrary, they are gladdened and made to rejoice. “Come and hear, all you that fear God, and I will tell you what He has done for my soul!” I am sure the response of all God’s people will be—“Let us hear it! Tell it to us, for we will rejoice with you and magnify the name of the Most High.”

IV. Fourthly, CONTINUED BENEFITS ARE A SPECIAL PROOF OF ENDURING MERCY. For God to slay Sihon, king of the Amorites, may hardly prove, by itself, that His mercy endures forever, though it does prove that He had mercy then. Therefore the inspired poet wisely strikes that string and before the note has died away upon the listening ear, He touches another. “Og king of Bashan,” says He, “for His mercy endures forever.” One, two, three, four, five, six succeeding stanzas—these mercies come quickly, one after the other, and so they show the continuance of the mercy, while the unbroken succession of wave upon wave in ceaseless regularity gives sanction to the chorus, “His mercy endures forever!”

Thus, dear Brethren, were we in the habit of dwelling distinctly upon God’s distinct mercies, do you not think we should have in our souls a firmer faith as to the endurance, the continuity, the everlastingness of the mercy of God? Oh, what the Lord did for us when we were babes in Grace! When we think of what He did then, we say, “His mercy endures forever.” Then consider what He did for us when we were young men in Christ Jesus! “His mercy endures forever.” Think of what He has done for us after we have grown to be fathers! “His mercy endures forever.” And O you gray heads, tell of what the Lord has done for you, for when you put all four ages together you can say with peculiar emphasis, “His mercy endures forever.”

I wish I had a memory strong enough to remember all the mercies of God to me in the past year. They have been very many, very great, and taken one by one, they have been very sweet. As I look at them, one after the other, the evidence seems to accumulate till the argument becomes conclusive that “His mercy endures forever.” It has endured all through the year! It was connected with all the years that went before! It is gathering fresh force in the year that is current! Therefore I may trust for the years that are yet to come that He who was yesterday so full of mercy and is, today, so full of Grace, will be forever the same!

Do you not see that the striking of these bells, one by one—the bringing out of each mercy in its distinctness, one after the other—goes to illustrate the precious and ever-blessed Truth of God that His mercy endures forever? Let our hearts look forward with the calm confidence which must come to a soul that lives by faith and sings without fear—

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

V. Fifthly, THE OVERRULING OF TRIALS IS A SUBJECT TO DWELL UPON WITH DELIGHT. Read the verses—“And gave their land for a heritage: for His mercy endures forever: even a heritage unto Israel His servant, for His mercy endures forever.” The Israelites did not expect to have the territory of Sihon and Og. Their land was on the other side of the Jordan, but since Sihon and Og assailed them as unexpected foes, they got out of them unexpected territory.

You and I have had, and we do have, unexpected trials. In looking back, we have suffered many trials which we did not anticipate, from unlikely quarters—from persons who ought to have been our friends, our helpers, our comforters. The result has shown that we have had unexpected advantages—our perils have proved pioneers of our progress. I want you to remember this, that you may sing the more sincerely, “His mercy endures forever.”

How many sins and how much unsuspected treachery of heart have we been led to discover through our troubles? Those vipers would have slept in our soul quietly—they would have bred disease there of the deadliest kind. But trouble came and we were put in such a state of trembling that we began to search. And as we searched we found the deadliest evil and we put it away. How many a vice has been discovered to us in the hour of trial? Whenever I hear of a Brother who thinks his corruptions are dead, I feel inclined to say, “Put him half-an-hour in the furnace and if he does not hear the dogs bark inside his soul, I am mistaken.”

There they are, sure enough. Depend upon that. As a general rule, he is possessed of most devils who thinks he has the fewest imperfections. Only let us get into trouble—be thrown into the sieve—and let the devil give us an extra shake or two, and there is enough of chaff or dust in us all to blind our eyes, or to fill them with tears when our Lord sends us repentance. This trouble must come and we must be thankful for the trouble since it winnows the wheat and makes us clean before the living God. Besides helping to cleanse us, how many times has trouble helped to instruct us? You may read the book all through, young man, and you may think that you know all about it, but your grandfather knows the meaning of texts that you cannot read yet.

“Oh,” you say, “I have been studying the commentators. I have been looking into them for the meaning of the passages.” Yes, but there is another way of reading the commentators and it comes from experience. Experience is the grand way of getting texts written upon your heart. There are many texts that cannot be brought home to your own heart yet. A text of that sort must be brought home to you when you are in such a position as to need its application—it cannot be understood until then. You may have learned all about anchors, Sir, but you never know the value of a sheet anchor till you have gotten into a storm.

You may read and hear, on shore, all about a tempest and you may have met with beautiful descriptions of it and think you know how it tosses the ship about. But I will guarantee you that a good heave or two will let you know more about sea-sickness and the effects of those mighty tempests that rouse the billows and rock the vessels than all the books you have ever read for sound instruction or seasonable entertainment! And how much has the Character of God been revealed to us in trouble? We do not know our friends till we fall into adversity! Neither is that, “Friend who sticks closer than a brother,” truly prized by us till we are brought into trouble. Then we know His power to sympathize and to succor. Trials help to strengthen us.

It is impossible for a Christian to be very strong—in certain ways, at any rate—unless he grapples with difficulties and endure hardships. There is no proving your courage and prowess in war unless you smell gunpowder and are exposed to the dread artillery. There is no learning to be strong in the battle unless you pass through trouble, depend upon it. My arm would soon weary if I had to lift the blacksmith’s hammer for an hour or two and make horseshoes. I am afraid I should soon give up the business. But the blacksmith’s arm does not ache, for he has been at it so many years and he rings out a tune on the anvil so joyfully does his strong arm do the work. Practice has strengthened him.

And so, when we have become used to trial and trouble, faith is to us a far more simple matter than it was before. Then we become “strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.” What shall we say, then? Thanks to Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, for teaching us war? No, but we will thank the Lord who has given “their land to be a heritage, even a heritage for Israel His servant: for His mercy endures forever.”

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

What have they done? Brothers and Sisters, it is a sad but gracious story. Israel! Israel! Why, that is the nation that made the golden calf and said, “These are your gods, O Israel.” Israel! Why, these are the people who said, “Because there were no graves in Egypt have You brought us into this wilderness to destroy us?” Israel! Why, these are the people that took the daughters of Moab and committed lewdness with them. Israel! Why, these are the people who provoked the Lord, so that He said to His servant, Moses, “Let Me alone! Let Me alone, that I may destroy them,” for they provoked the Lord to jealousy. Israel! Why, these are the people of whom God swore in His wrath that they should not enter into His rest. Yet it is the same nation! Their children have followed them! It is Israel, still, and God has done all this for Israel.

Now, while you are thinking about Israel, just begin to think about yourselves. For whom has God done all this—turned judgment into mercy, fought great battles on their behalf and given them a great inheritance of mercy and loving kindness and favor? Who is it for? Well, I will not mention anybody’s name, but I will mention my own to myself, and as I men

tion it, I think— *“O Grace, it is Your known love  
Into unlikeliest hearts to come.”*  
How amazing that You should do all this for such an one as I am. Brother, Sister, I can better understand God’s mercy to you than I can  
His mercy to me! I know one who has, in distress, sometimes doubted the  
loving kindness of the Lord. I know one who has been proud, envious and  
worldly. I know one whose heart has been cold, dead, callous, careless—  
when it ought to have been tender and full of pity and full of love. I know  
one that is all imperfections, all faults. He seems, to himself, to grow  
worse, instead of better, everyday—at least he loathes himself more a  
hundred times than he used to do. And yet I know that the Lord loves that  
man. But why, I do not know, except, “even so, Father, for so it seems  
good in Your sight.”  
And if you tell your own story and know your own hearts and your own  
lives, you will wonder and be astonished to the extreme of wonderment  
that the Lord should give a heritage to Israel—to you, His servant, truly  
His servant—but a poor, faulty servant to have such a heritage given him  
out of the abundance of the Grace of God. And why does He do it but that  
His mercy endures forever? Is there one of us who might not justly be in  
Hell before the clock ticks again if it were not that His mercy endures forever? The brightest saint here has no brightness but what God lends him,  
and He only lends it to him because His mercy endures forever!. Oh, bless His name, you children of His that live near to Him—you that  
have climbed to the highest stage of communion! Remember, you do not  
stand there because of anything in yourselves, but because His mercy endures forever! If you have conquered your sins—Sihon king of the Amorites—it is because His mercy endures forever. And if, today, you put your  
foot upon the neck of Og, king of Bashan, it is not because you are strong,  
but because His mercy endures forever. If you have grown in sanctification and begun to possess the land which God has given to be a heritage  
to His people, it is still because His mercy endures forever.  
And when death, itself, is dead, and you have passed beyond the gate  
of pearl and taken possession of the throne reserved for you with Christ at  
God’s right hand, the only reason why you shall get there will be because  
His mercy endures forever. This is the song of every saved soul in this  
Tabernacle, as it shall be in the temple above, from now on and forevermore. I think it ought to be a great encouragement to those of you who are  
not God’s people, if there are any such present, and there may be. Oh,  
how it ought to ring in your ears, “His mercy endures forever!” You are  
very old, but His mercy endures forever! You are very sick and near death,  
but His mercy endures forever! You have gone to the utmost extreme of  
sin, but His mercy endures forever!  
You have resisted His Spirit. You have stifled your conscience. You  
have been disobedient to Christ, but His mercy endures forever! You have  
indulged every evil passion. You have broken loose from every bond that  
ought to have held you to the way of right, but His mercy endures forever!  
The last day of your life is almost come, but His mercy still endures and  
will endure till you die. If death comes, we have no Gospel for the dead,  
but as long as you live, that mercy still endures—

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

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

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

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON— Numbers 21:21-35; Deuteronomy 2:16-37, 3:11.**  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—136, 196.

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GOD THE WONDER-WORKER  
NO. 1981

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 4, 1887, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“To Him who alone does great wonders: for His mercy endures forever.” Psalm 136:4.**

BELOVED, when we get into God’s world of wonders, we have range enough. Which way shall I turn? On what subject shall I speak? If I turn to nature, it teems with wonders. Altering a little the language of Coleridge I would say, “All true science begins with wonder, and ends with wonder— and the space between is filled up with admiration.” If we turn to Providence, the history of the nations, the history of the Church, what centuries of wonders pass before us! It is said that wise men only wonder once and that is always. Fools never wonder because they are fools. The story of the Church is a constellation of miracles. I cannot venture upon themes so vast as Creation and Providence. Shall we turn to the works of Grace, the wonders of Redemption? If we consider the glory of Grace surrounding the Cross, which is the wonder of wonders, we are upon a boundless ocean! Here is sea room, indeed—we are at no loss for a subject, but we are lost in the subject. Now are we where the height, and depth, and length, and breadth are each immeasurable! It was said of Dr. Barrow that he was an unfair preacher because he exhausted every subject he touched and left nothing for anyone else to say. I would like Dr. Barrow to try

 my text! I am sure for once he would have to vary his style. He would only be able to suggest to us what might be said by 10,000 preachers, all occupied 10,000 years upon this one theme!

“To Him who alone does great wonders: for His mercy endures forever.” I feel inclined to bow the knee instead of opening the mouth—and to ask you rather to meditate in the silence of your hearts than to listen to my scanty speech. Happily, the text assists me, for it suggests that I narrow my theme to the consideration of wonders of mercy—and that I then narrow it again to present wonders of mercy, for the text is in the present tense—“To Him who alone does great wonders,” that is to say, is doing them now! Only, then, of marvels of mercy shall I speak at this time and I shall endeavor, as far as possible, to direct your thoughts to present wonders of mercy. I say, as far as possible, for it must necessarily be that we link with the present both the past and the future because they are all of one, for God lives in all the tenses at once.

I. Our first head shall be this—GOD IS WORKING WONDERS OF MERCY NOW. “To Him who alone does great wonders: for His mercy endures forever.” It is enduring now and is in the present tense forever.

Wonders are things out of the common, unusual things, extraordinary things. Usually they are unexpected. We wonder at them partly because they are novel and surprising. They take us aback—they are things which we looked not for. When they come, they astonish us and put us both in a muse and in a maze. We look, and look, and look, and cannot believe our eyes! We hear, and hear, and scarcely believe our ears! Great wonders, even when we grow accustomed to them, still continue to excite admiration and frequently they cause us to praise the worker of them, as it is written, “Sing unto the Lord; for He has done marvelous things.”

I believe that today God is doing great wonders in saving great sinners. It is a wonder that God should touch a sinner at all, yes, that He should even look at him! A sinner is such an evil thing. His sin is so vile, so foul, that holiness cannot take any pleasure in him. He who fails to obey his Maker is creation’s blank, creation’s blot—and it is a wonder that his Creator should think of him with patience. But that God should call the sinner with the voice of love and bid him return and find favor is a wonder. That when he does not return at the gracious bidding, the Lord should draw him with bands of love, is still more wonderful! The Lord takes more trouble with a sinner than it cost Him to make a world—He could complete the globe in six days, but it often takes many years to bring a sinner to repentance and to perfect his salvation. The abounding of Divine wisdom, prudence, long-suffering and patience are needed to work salvation. The Lord, travailing with compassion, goes about to compass the salvation of the greatly erring one. He is still doing great wonders in changing depraved natures, breaking hard hearts, subduing obstinate wills, enlightening darkened judgments and winning rebellious minds. Jesus is still working spiritual miracles and of this fact many of us are instances in our own persons—and also eyewitnesses of the like wonders worked on others. Blessed be God! We still see with wonder, sinners saved by the marvelous Grace of God! The riches of His mercy are still displayed in the salvation of the lost!

Nor less may the wonders of the Lord be seen in the preservation of those who believe on His name. A true Believer’s life is a mystery to himself and to others. Concerning the wind, you cannot tell from where it comes, nor where it goes and, “so is everyone that is born of the Spirit.” We are men wondered at! Do you not wonder, my Brothers and Sisters, that you are still a Christian? Faith is so contrary to nature that its existence in the heart is like a spark burning in the sea! Faith is so much attacked, especially in this evil day, that it is like a candle kept alight in a cyclone! Yet you have not drawn back unto perdition! Still, though faint, you are pursuing. Truly if you had been mindful of the country from which you came out, you would have had many opportunities to return. Satan’s chariots and his horses have waited upon you with many invitations to ride back into the land of your former slavery if you had a mind to go. Alas, the evil heart of unbelief has lusted for the leeks and garlic and onions many a time! Kept alive with death so near, you are a standing wonder to yourself. What great things the Lord has done for you! How He has led you, instructed you, helped you, comforted you! All these, as I mention them, will wake up many admiring memories and cause you to cry—“The Lord has done great things for us, whereof we are glad!”

To me, also, it is a great wonder that God should use any of us—we seem so unfit for His holy purposes. Can He write with such a pen as I am upon the fleshy tablets of men’s hearts? What? Can He paint a fair picture of holiness in the characters of my hearers with so poor a brush as I am? Then, indeed, He does great wonders! That which God does by our instrumentality at any time, if, indeed, it is for His Glory, should fill us with astonishment! When Saul, who formerly persecuted the saints, saw saints made under his ministry, he was drawn out in wondering adoration as he wrote, “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this Grace given.”

The Lord God still does wonders by maintaining His church and the cause of Truth in the midst of the world. Read through history and you meet with periods when the light seemed quenched. But then suddenly it burned with superior luster! Remember the Reformation—and the revival of the last century! When spiritual life seemed almost extinct, there came times of refreshing from the Presence of the Lord. It will be the same at this dark hour! All the devils in Hell can never quench the light of the Truth of God. They may do all they can in union with all the wise men of the world to put down the old Gospel of the Cross, but even though they should slay it and bury it, it would rise again! When the voices which have been lifted up against the Gospel shall have been silenced forever, the Word of the Lord shall sound forth to the ends of the earth! God is still doing great wonders in the maintenance of His despised Gospel and in the keeping alive of those spiritual doctrines which the carnal mind hates as much today as it ever did.

Now, dear Brothers and Sisters, why may we expect the Lord to still do wonders? I answer, first, because His Word raises our expectations. Surely the Lord will not cease to work wonders and descend to the commonplace, for this Book talks of great things and marvelous things! Does He not say concerning His great Grace, “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts”? Have we not many passages of Scripture which run in this wise—“Though your sins are as scarlet they shall be as white as snow”? The universe is challenged by the question, “Who is a God like unto You, that pardons iniquity and passes by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage?” Hear our Lord speak and invite the laboring and heavy laden to His rest. Hear Him declare that, “All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” Hear how His Apostles declare that “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”

Paul, that chief of sinners, sets himself forth as the type and pattern according to which God will work in the after ages. This inspired Book does not promise us small things! It is not pitched in a low key. Concerning the multitudes that will be saved in the latter days, it speaks in grand terms, saying, “Nations that knew You not shall run unto You.” We have so much to this effect that I will not stay to quote the passages—only of this we are sure—that one day we shall hear the glorious shout, “Hallelujah! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns.” Anyone who is familiar with Holy Scripture will expect that God will continue to work wonders in the realm of Grace.

But, Beloved, we have something more than words. God has evidently made preparations for doing great things. When He made the Covenant of Grace to be the very soul and center of all His acts. When He put it first, last and midst, He did not intend little things. Jehovah does not swear by Himself about trifles, nor lift His hand to Heaven concerning small matters! The very existence of the Everlasting Covenant is the sure prophecy of Grace on a grand scale, Grace magnified to the astonishment of all intelligent beings. When the glorious Son of the Highest came from Heaven and veiled His Godhead in human flesh, He had designs of a majestic Character. An Incarnate God forebodes great Grace to our humanity. And when as God and Man, in one Person, our Lord Jesus suffered shame, scourging, condemnation and bowed Himself, at last, to death, the result of all His passion cannot mean the salvation of a few, or a questionable salvation for many! It must foretell a sure salvation for a multitude of great sinners! Stupendous guilt is intended to be washed away by the blood of so Divine a Sacrifice. If our Lord Jesus Christ is to receive a reward commensurate with His accomplished work, we may safely look for things which shall amaze the world! Such a feast as I see spread within the royal halls of Grace is not intended for a handful of guests. When oxen and fatlings are killed to provide such abundant meat, the host must have an eye to vast numbers of guests of voracious appetite! The provision of Grace in Christ Jesus is so abundant that it must be meant for a wonderful assembly of needy souls. Come, then, and try the freeness and fullness of Christ and see if you are refused!

Furthermore, when I reflect that the Holy Spirit has come down from Heaven and that He has never left us, but abides with His Church to carry out the purposes of Grace by convicting men of sin and glorifying Christ, I am encouraged to look for great things. The Holy Spirit is not here in vain! He intends to do great things. If the biggest blasphemer out of Hell were reported to be saved today, I should not find it difficult to believe the news. If, in this house, there should be one who has denied the Deity of our Lord and has cast off all fear of God and, consequently, has plunged into the worst forms of sin, I can readily hope that the Lord may pass by all his transgressions and make him one of His most earnest servants! It would be a wonder—it may seem to be an impossibility—but this is no reason why it should not be done! God has made preparation for producing this kind of wonder! Faith is led confidently to expect what reason would never suggest!

When I see, in addition to the Covenant, the Christ and the Holy Spirit, all the preparations of the Lord’s effectual power for the coming of the Lord, for His glorious reign upon the earth and for the eternal glorification of the redeemed, I am assured in my own soul that the Lord is working upon a wonderful scale, whether we see it or not. Between now and the consummation of all things, wonders are to be common! The pathway of Grace shall blaze with splendor. I invite you to enlarge your hope concerning Him who alone “does great wonders: for His mercy endures forever.”

Dear Friends, we are not left to promises and preparations. Our faith is continually refreshed by new facts. I have the great happiness of frequently seeing very extraordinary instances of God’s Grace among sinful men. I will not relate even one of them, but my memory is stored with them. Often my eyes are filled with tears when I grip the hand of a convert who but a little while ago was a blasphemer and injurious, a Sabbathbreaker, a drunk—and sunk in every form of uncleanness. When I see such a man converted, renewed and made holy because the Lord has met with him and revealed Himself to him through the preaching of the Word, my eyes are filled with tears of wondering joy. When I find that such a poor testimony as I am able to bear is made effectual, by God’s Grace, to work a total change of nature, I am overwhelmed with wondering and grateful emotions! To see the Lord lift wretches from the dunghill and set them among the princes of His people causes us to hold up our hands in joyful astonishment and ascribe all praise “To Him who alone does great wonders: for His mercy endures forever.”

The joy is that you and I assembled here this morning either are, or may be, personal instances of the wonder-working power of God. O my Hearer, if you will now, in your great sin, accept great mercy you may have it! If you will come with all your evil habits binding you and ask to be set free from them, the great Redeemer will break those manacles from your wrists and give you a glorious liberty! Is not our Lord named Jesus because He shall save His people from their sins? If you are the greatest sinner out of the bottomless pit, if you will look to Christ upon the Cross and trust in Him, alone, you shall be born again! You shall pass from death unto life and your many sins shall be forgiven you. Some of us are always wondering why the Lord loved us, why He bought us, why He sought us and why He continues to acknowledge us—and our heart’s desire is that all of you who come to this House of Prayer may become similar wonders of Divine Grace! The Lord grant that the wonders may begin this morning!

We are assured that among us upon whom the ends of the earth have come, “the Lord does great wonders.” Did I hear anyone say, “Truly, if I were converted it would be a wonder”? Yes, you are excellent raw material for God to work upon in the creation of a wonder. Did I hear another say, “A person is here this morning who, if he were saved, would be a wonder, indeed”? Pray for him, then! Pray at once, distinctly for him, in the glad hope that he will be another wonder! The God of Infinite Mercy looks out for room for His Grace to work in and space for Almighty Love to display its power! Your necessity, feebleness and emptiness are the space in which Infinite Mercy finds elbowroom for its energy! He “who alone does great wonders,” looks for the greatly guilty and the greatly needy—that in them He may reveal His Grace. Oh, that my heart were enlarged and my mouth were opened fitly to encourage you who think you are beyond the bounds of Divine Mercy! Oh, think not that the Grace of God can never come to you! The Lord delights in mercy! He loves to do that which is unexpected by the heart of man! He delights in surprising men with His Grace and getting to Himself renown by His love! He will, for His own name’s sake, do great wonders of mercy. Because no reason can be found in men, themselves, the Lord resolves to find it in Himself and, therefore, He lavishes His Grace that His Glory may be wondered at, both in Heaven and in earth!

II. I pass on to another phase of the same thought, for upon this one thought I mean to harp at this time so that this one note shall linger in your ears for many a day. Our first head has been that God is working wonders of mercy. Our second point is that THESE WONDERS ARE STILL GREAT. “To Him who alone does great wonders.”

We have heard of wonders that were not great, for they were not even true. The magicians of Egypt withstood Moses with their enchantments— and false prophets have much relied upon tricks and deceptions. Antichrist to this day is prone to use lying wonders. But God’s wonders are real! They are truly wonderful and are not mere pretences. Neither Nature, nor Providence, nor Grace lends any countenance to mere outside appearance—the deeper you go in God’s wonders, the more wonderful they are! That which the Lord does is peculiarly His own. Even as the magicians said, “This is the finger of God,” and ceased from their conjuring, they had touched upon the inimitable and were forced to pause.

Many apparent wonders can be explained and, therefore, the wonder is gone. Certain nations wonder at an eclipse, which to the astronomer is a very simple affair. Now, you cannot explain away election, redemption, regeneration and the pardon of sin—these great wonders of Almighty Love are all the greater, the more you know of them. Many wonders, also, are diminished by familiarity. Well do I remember as a child being taken to see the first train drawn by a steam engine to our town—I greatly wondered—but I have now ceased to wonder at such an ordinary sight. I remember a viaduct, which to my juvenile mind was stupendous. I have seen it since and it is by no means one of the wonders of the world! The wonders of Grace are such that the more you see them the more your wonder grows. In these cases it is ignorance which does not wonder, but knowledge marvels exceedingly.

Those who are most familiar with the Lord think the most of Him and of His Grace. The wonders of Divine Grace are so great that they can never be eclipsed by any greater marvels. No one will ever tell us a more marvelous story than the life and death of our Lord for sinful men. In the gift of Jesus Christ the Infinite God has outdone all His previous acts. This is the greatest wonder that angels ever heard of—they still desire to look into it. This is, in words and sense, the climax of all miracles—“God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” When you and I have, for millions and millions of years, realized what Divine Mercy means, my conviction is that we shall wonder more at the Lord’s Grace than we do now! Salvation is an exceedingly great wonder, like the great mountains, or the great sea. The loving kindness of the Lord is immeasurable. “Now,” cries someone, “you speak about wonders. If I were to be converted it would not only be a wonder, but a great wonder.” That is why I expect it, for the Lord still takes pleasure in performing great wonders! “Oh, but I am such a devil in sin! I have gone to the brink of Hell! It is impossible that I should be forgiven.” That is why I expect to see such pardons given! Unconquerable mercy will, I trust, take up the challenge of your sin. The Lord is at home with great things. You and I are often overbalanced with small affairs, but the Lord’s element is greatness. See Him making worlds, striking them off like sparks from the anvil of His creating power! Miracles are commonplace with God. His is essential and unrivalled greatness. “The nations are as a drop of a bucket: He takes up the isles as a very little thing.” The Lord grants great forgiveness to great sinners and takes pleasure to work great transformations in those who were soaked through and through with sin.

Why does God work great wonders of Grace? I answer, because He is great and greatly wonderful. He acts according to His Nature when He does great wonders. He is so wonderful a God that no one has ever formed an adequate conception of Him. We do not understand God, nor can we comprehend Him. We know that there is such an One and we love and praise Him, but to say that we understand God as a man is understood by his fellow would be very far from the truth. Ten thousand minds, educated to the highest and even filled with the Holy Spirit, if they could unite their largest ideas, could not compass the Infinite Jehovah! You have filled so many little cups with the waters of the sea, but you are as far off as ever from having taken up the great deep. It is but natural that the Infinite One should do great wonders. The Lord is inconceivably great and, therefore, we are unable to imagine a limit to what He may do in a direction so much His own as that of mercy, since God is Love. Assuredly, to be great in everything is after the manner of the great Lord—He does greatly pardon, greatly renew, greatly love, greatly bless, greatly glorify. Oh, that we would believe Him to be great, then should we, with Mary, sing, “My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit does rejoice in God my Savior.”

Do not despondingly imagine that God will allow His wonders to dwindle down as the world grows old. “Oh,” you say, “He did great wonders in the olden times, but He is not of that mind now.” Is that your God? My God is the same—He faints not, neither is weary. He still does great wonders. Jehovah who divided the Red Sea is our God forever and ever! He could divide the Atlantic if He willed it and would do so if it were necessary for the fulfillment of His gracious purposes. The God who fed His people in the wilderness may not cause manna to fall from Heaven, today, but He will, none the less, give food unto His people. “Your place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks; your bread shall be given you, and your waters shall be sure.” The Lord can do as much today as He did in the elder ages. Yes, we may look for

 greater things than these! I do not believe that God’s music is now marked with diminuendo, but I see crescendo on the score— it grows in volume and in force as the ages roll along! The Lord leads our wondering minds on from height to height and reveals to us more and more the glory of His power.

This leads me to believe that the Lord Jesus will yet save greater sinners than He ever did if there are such sinners. Our Lord celebrated His entrance into Paradise by the salvation of a thief. And soon after His Resurrection, He restored Peter. He will always be saving thieves and restoring backsliders! He went after Saul of Tarsus, who was both a persecutor and a blasphemer—and He means always to be saving sinners of that kind. That Philippian jailer, converted at the dead of night, is but a specimen of the sort of hard, rough, cruel brutes that He will still subdue by His mighty Grace! The Lord will go on to save great sinners, for He has put His hand to the plow of Grace and He will not look back—

*“Jesus reigns on Zion’s hill,*

*He receives poor sinners still.”*  
The most guilty and most hardened—and most daring of rebels are welcome to come to Jesus and look to Him and live! How pleased I am to preach this Gospel! Oh, that I could preach it better! I expect the Lord to go on saving great sinners by these words of mine and this shall be to the praise of the glory of His Grace!

We may expect the Lord to forgive great sins such as murders, adulteries, robberies, blasphemies and sins unmentionable. Mercy gets to itself renown when it annihilates giant sins—then we sing of Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, overthrown by the Lord, whose mercy endures forever. His mercy is not an atom less than it used to be, for it endures forever. The ocean of today is as full as when Jonah went down into its deeps. The sun of today is as bright as when it shone on Lot entering Zoar. And the Grace of God is as full, as broad, as deep, as Omnipotent, as when our Savior dwelt among men and said to one and another, “Your sins are forgiven you”!

The Lord is also doing great wonders in displaying great condescensions to those who believe on His Son Jesus Christ. It would be a great wonder and make our hearts leap for joy if the Lord should meet with us today. And, unworthy as we are, He is ready to do so. It would be a great wonder if He were to restore our backslidings and heal the bones which are broken by our sins. And He waits to act as our soul’s surgeon. It would be a great wonder if He were to enter in and sup with us, and we with Him— and He even now knocks at the door of our hearts with that design! The Lord’s bosom may still be leaned upon! We may still lean on our Beloved! He will still kiss us with the kisses of His mouth! The Lord still dwells with the humble and contrite, for this great wonder of condescension still delights Him.

The Lord is working great wonders of delivering Grace . Are any of you in great trouble or great danger? The Lord that delivered David out of the paws of the lion and out of the paws of the bear, and from the hand of the uncircumcised Philistine will deliver you, also, with a great deliverance! He that saved Daniel in the den of lions and brought him out unharmed, even He that walked with the holy children in the burning fiery furnace, is still the same God! He can, He will, He does deliver! You shall see His great wonders if you will but trust in Him. You that are tossed about and sorely pained with the present state of the Church of God—you may look for wonders of Grace. I expect our Lord to do great wonders at this time by sending us great revivals of religion, or in some other way making bare His holy arm. What shall withstand Him if He does but awake Himself!

In former ages the light has burned very low and then the Lord has trimmed the lamp. The Lord has spoken and great has been the multitudes of them that have published His Word. Then “kings of armies did flee; and she that tarried at home divided the spoil.” It shall still be so! Oh, You that do great wonders, fight for Yourself this day and make the adversaries of Your Truth melt away! Let us pray for the visitations of the Holy Spirit, but never let us give way to doubt, even for a moment. “Therefore we will not fear, though the earth is removed, and though the mountains are carried into the midst of the sea. The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.” Now we have got some good way into our text—“To Him that does great wonders” be glory forever and ever!

III. The third point is this—THESE GREAT WONDERS ARE WORKED BY GOD ALONE. He alone does great wonders. Lay emphasis heavily upon the word, “alone.”

My Brothers and Sisters, there are deeds of kindness which you could not expect anyone else to do. The most forgiving of human spirits can never pardon as God does. You, poor sinner, have been measuring God’s corn with your bushel and, therefore, you conclude that He cannot forgive you. But His long-suffering and Grace are greater than yours! If you had offended others as you have offended God, you might safely come to the conclusion that forgiveness would be out of the question. But the Lord far outruns all others in mercy! None can forgive and forget as the Lord does! It was never heard of, that one could pass over such offenses and rebellions as God does freely blot out. The Lord can and is daily doing such acts of love and mercy as would be looked for in vain among men and angels! Believe that God is more able to forgive than you are able to believe!

Have you written it down among your sadly sure conclusions that you are certain to be lost? The God of All Grace delights to contradict our despairs. He will disannul your covenant with death and deliver the lawful captive from the hand of the destroyer. He will interpose in an unheard-of manner. He says, “Behold, I will do a new thing.” He will do that which we looked not for—and thus make us acknowledge that He, alone, does great wonders! God’s Grace is unique. To whom will you liken Him? In this He alone is seen to be God. None can approach Him, so as to be mentioned in the same day! He does for us exceedingly abundantly above what we ask or even think. Ah, poor desponding soul! You had a dream. Did you not dream that you were a child, again, and could begin life once more? You woke up and cried, “Ah me! This will never be true. I wish it were.” It can be true! The Lord can make you to become a little child again by being born again! It is hard, I know, for you to believe it, but nothing ought to be hard to believe concerning the God whose mercy endures forever! He alone, Himself, and by Himself, can perform prodigies of love!

When it is said that He does these great wonders, “alone,” it means that He does them when nobody can help Him. My Friend, you cannot do anything—you are now reduced to utter impotence under a sense of sin. You fear that you cannot even believe, or feel, but the Lord is All-Sufficient and He, alone, does great wonders. He can do all for you and work all in you. What strange creatures we are! We feel that we must try to help God. What folly is this! O poor creature of a day, did you help Him to make the world? Where were you when the mountains were brought forth? O feeble creature, what can you do? Can you help Him in Providence? He asks no aid from you. I have known some poor souls complain that they cannot feel their nothingness—and they fancy that if they felt their nothingness, Christ could, then, save them! This is odd, is it not? Here is a man who must help God by his nothingness! Out of the way with you! You do but block the road! Stand aside and let Grace work! What can you do? Do you reply, “I must believe and repent?” I know you must, but—

*“True belief, and true repentance,  
Every Grace that brings us nigh—  
Without money,  
Come to Jesus Christ and buy.”*

Jesus Christ comes to save you just as you are and His salvation comes to you where you are. When they make railways in England, they usually carry them sufficiently far from a town to give work to an omnibus. Seldom does the station stand near the house where one wants to go. The railway to Heaven is of another sort—it comes to your door! Jesus comes where you are and meets your actual condition. Though you lie at death’s door, Christ comes as the Resurrection and the Life. Though you pine in the vestibule of Hell, almighty mercy comes to free you from condemnation. In your spiritual helplessness and hopelessness, Jesus comes to you, saying, “Trust Me now to be All in All to you.” Praise Him who alone, without your puny aid, or the aid of a priest, or the aid of mortifications and penances, can remove your sins and make you pure and holy! His own arm brings salvation to those who trust Him and He, alone, does great wonders!

When the Lord uses means in the salvation of a soul, He takes care that nobody shall praise the means or ascribe the salvation to the agent. He has many ways with His most useful servants of making them keep their places—and you will notice that as soon as ever any one of them begins to grow rather large in his own esteem, he is usually met with weakness and barrenness. We must, Brothers, keep self out of the way. We must put ourselves absolutely into God’s hands that He may use us in the winning of souls—and then we must send the great I down, down, down, till it is buried out of all remembrance. They tell us that when you go fishing it is wise to stand back and keep yourself out of sight as much as possible. The fish that see you will not take the bait. The Lord will not do great wonders in company, but alone! His servants must not set up to be masters, or they will be sternly rebuked. On the Throne of Grace, God will brook no rival. If we are to see Jesus increase, we must decrease. If Christ goes up, self goes down. The Lord says, “My Glory will I not give to another.” We shall be made to forget the minister and every other worker— and recognize the fact that the Lord, alone, does great wonders.

O Brothers and Sisters, when I think of what the Lord has done for some of us by forgiving and saving us, how His glorious name rises and fills the whole Heaven! God is not to be compared with any—they vanish as He appears. The Father is everything! He alone does great wonders when He receives the returning prodigal. The Son of God who bore our sins in His own body on the tree is everything to us and, He, alone, is The Wonderful. When we shall see Him it will be as the Lamb in the midst of the Throne of God. We shall give no praise for our salvation to any but Himself and that Divine Spirit who regenerates us. Beloved, we rely on no influences of any sort save that almighty influence which proceeds from the Holy Spirit. “He alone does great wonders.”

This should be a great comfort to those of you who are not yet saved. If I were in your condition I would try to catch at the text this morning. God Himself is able to save. Trust Jesus and live!

Here is also comfort for children of God who are exercised concerning the state of the Churches. Be encouraged, for the Lord who alone does great wonders is equal to the emergency. Perhaps He will strip us still more. Perhaps He will take away every able man that now preaches the Gospel—and when our Calvins and Luthers and Zwinglies are all dead, then, maybe, He, alone, will do great wonders. Be it so, if so it pleases Him, for He must have all the Glory. The extremity of the Church shall be the opportunity of God. But, man of God, you can be sure that His everlasting purposes will stand and His Divine Covenant of mercy will endure forever!

IV. I close with my last head—upon which I will speak briefly. Beloved, if you know anything about these wonders, these great wonders, these wonders in which God stands alone, then remember that FOR THESE WONDERS HE IS TO BE PRAISED. This verse is an ascription of praise. “To Him who alone does great wonders: for His mercy endures forever.” It means—to Him be thanks and praise and power and honor and majesty forever and ever. Oh, that we could fill the universe with praise!

Wonder is a sort of praise—it is the chaos out of which a world of praise is to be made. Sit still and silently meditate on the greatness and goodness of God until you are overcome with admiration—and then you will adore. Our wonderment should always blossom into thanks. Holy wonder is like sweet incense, but love must set it on fire with a burning coal of gratitude. “O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good: for His mercy endures forever.”

If you will begin to praise the Lord for His great wonders of mercy, I will tell you what will happen to you. First, we shall find His Nature revealed to us. “O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good.” We shall begin to see the essential goodness of God and then we shall the better understand the manifestations of it as seen in 10,000 ways. This is something to learn. We learn through the habit of praise to know, in a measure, what God is!

Next, while praising Him for His wonders, you will learn to adore His Godhead. “Give thanks unto the God of gods.” It is a grand thing to be deeply impressed that God is God. Has He not said, “Be still and know that I am God”? We do not know what God is, but we know that He is God. We cannot comprehend Him, but we apprehend this much—that He is God. It is the greatest thought a man can ever think when He thinks that God is God. I would have you praise Him until you know that He is God, for you will treat Him as He should be treated when you distinctly recognize the Glory of His Deity.

If you will keep on praising Him for His wonders, you will come to know somewhat of His sovereignty. “O give thanks unto the Lord of lords,” for He rules over all things, both in Heaven and in earth, and in all deep places. I reverently adore and heartily love the doctrine of the Sovereignty of God. Those words which are terrible to the ungodly are sweet to him who knows the love of God—“I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy; I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.” We can trust our God with unlimited power and with the right to do whatever He wills. And it is a part of our worship that we should never question whatever He may do. “It is the Lord; let Him do what seems good to Him.”

Still, when you praises God for the wonders He has worked for you, and for others, let the climax of your praise be this, that, “His mercy endures forever.” Magnify with all your faculties of mind and heart—with memory, hope, fear and every emotion of which you are capable—the changeless mercy of God. He is always merciful, or full of mercy. He always will be so. You have a God of Immutable goodness, rejoice in Him at all times and under all aspects! When you think upon His terrible Justice, doubt not His Mercy. Pharaoh is cast into the Red Sea, but Jehovah’s mercy endures. He slays mighty kings, but, “His mercy endures forever.” Yes, when you see Hell engulf the impenitent and you think with solemn awe of the dread punishment necessary to sin, rest assured that this alters not the fact that God is Love and that, “His mercy endures forever.” There must be no collision in your thoughts between His Justice and His Mercy—they are both Divine and they both endure forever!

Do you say, “Hallelujah!” even when you see His wrath? Accepting His mercy in Jesus, praise Him! Resting in that mercy, praise Him! Hoping in that mercy, that it will follow you all the days of your life, praise Him! Byand-by, Brothers and Sisters, we shall know more of His eternal mercy and then we shall praise Him in loftier strains. Shall we ever need a sweeter song than this—“To Him who alone does great wonders: for His mercy endures forever”? As we shall hear the harpers harping with their harps and see the holy ones casting their crowns before Him on the glassy sea, shall we not chant this great Hallel—“To Him who alone does great wonders: for His mercy endures forever”? The Lord bless you always! Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 136.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”— (SONG I), 117, 136 (SONG II).  
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OPEN PRAISE AND PUBLIC CONFESSION  
NO. 2604

**A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JANUARY 8, 1899. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 11, 1883.

**“I will praise You with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto You. I will worship toward Your holy Temple, and praise Your name for Your loving kindness and for Your Truth: for You have magnified Your Word above all Your name. In the day when I cried, You answered me, and strengthened me with strength in my soul.” Psalm 138:1-3.**

IT is a very grievous thing, to one who worships the only living and true God, to see others engaged in idolatrous worship. It stirs one’s indignation to see a man worship—not his own hands, but what is even worse than that—the thing which he has made with his own hands and which must, therefore, be inferior to himself. As the righteous soul of Lot in Sodom was vexed with the filthy conversation of the inhabitants of that guilty city, so the righteous soul of David was vexed when he saw the many lords and gods before whom his neighbors were bowing down and, in like manner, as long as we are in this world, we shall often be troubled through seeing how others turn aside from the living God, how they forget His Truth, set up thoughts of their own in the place of the thoughts of God and dishonor the Holy Scripture by thinking that their own vain ideas can equal, if not even excel, the Revelation of God!

David, in this matter, becomes a guide to us. What he did in the presence of the idols of the heathen is, to a great extent, what we should do in the presence of the false systems of religion and the errors which are all around us! You, dear Friends, cannot love the right if you do not hate the wrong! I would not give a penny for your love to the Truth of God if it is not accompanied with a hearty hatred of error. I have taken this text as an instruction to myself as well as to you. What David did with all his heart, as a man who loved Jehovah, the only true God, we also should do if, indeed, we love the Lord Jesus Christ and all the glorious Truths which cluster around His glorious Deity and His atoning Sacrifice.

I. How, then, will we act? We will try to act exactly as David did, and if we do so, we shall, first of all, SING WITH WHOLE-HEARTED PRAISE. “I will praise You with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto You.” This seems a very singular thing to do. Here is a man indignant with these false gods—one would suppose that he would begin to argue on behalf of the true God, that he would raise a controversy on behalf of Jehovah—but he does nothing of the kind. At least, this is not the first thing that he does. He begins to praise God and to sing that praise aloud! “I will praise You with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto You.”

This was a very singular method of procedure, yet a very wise one, for, first, his song would openly show his contempt for the false gods. What does it matter to him what these idols really are? Men call them gods, so, for the moment, he calls them gods, too. And he begins to sing, not to them, but to his own God, the only living and true God! He pitches the tune, he lifts up the strain, he sings a Psalm—and this is the theme of his music—“Glorious are You, O Jehovah!” And he does this in the very presence of the idol gods and their worshippers, as much as to say, “I take so little notice of them all that I will not even be disturbed about them. I was singing the praises of Jehovah and I shall go on singing them. I was full of holy joy and I intend, still, to be so. Those gods of the heathen are nothing, but our God made the heavens! Therefore, I will not rob Him of His Glory, or deprive Him of His full revenue of praise, by turning aside even for a single moment to pay any attention to these mere blocks of wood and stone.” It was a wise way of acting on the part of David, and it was also a generous way, because he did not in words pour contempt upon the idols, but he showed his contempt for them by presenting his praise to Jehovah alone.

Let us do the same, Beloved. Do not worry yourself about those who turn aside from the Truth of God and run in their own crooked ways. Warn them as best you can, but remember David’s advice on another occasion—“Fret not yourself because of evildoers.” You have better work to do than to fret about them! Begin to praise your God and go on praising Him! Sing as many songs unto Him as ever you did and let your heart be just as glad as ever it can be. “Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.” And if the Lord laughs, let us not cry! If He treats them with such calm contempt, let us do the same and lift up our voices again and again unto Him whose mercy endures forever, and whose throne is so established that all the leaguered hosts of earth and Hell cannot shake it for a single moment! “Say among the heathen that the Lord reigns.” “The Lord sits upon the flood; yes, the Lord sits King forever.” Therefore, let no man’s heart fail him, but let all who love the Lord show their contempt for His adversaries by pouring out their joyful adoration unto the Most High!

I like David’s plan of dealing with the idols, by continuing his wholehearted praise to God, because, next, it would show his strong faith in the true God. I cannot tell any better way by which he could have shown his confidence in Jehovah. He had already poured contempt upon the false gods, but now his calm, happy singing proves his reverence for the Most High and makes men see that if they doubt, he does not! If they rail, he knows how vain their railing is. It proves to them that there is at least one man who has true faith in God, for he stands like a solid rock amid the surging sea. He is not moved. No, he is not affected enough to postpone his music, but he keeps on singing and singing the more loudly, as the more the sea roars and the fullness thereof. The more shrill the noise of the tumultuous idolaters, the more does he proclaim aloud his holy joy and his unshaken confidence in his God! True faith is one of the best of sermons. He who is—

*“Calm ‘mid the bewildering cry,*

*Confident of victory,”*  
has, by that trustful calmness, done more to inspire the timid with confidence than if he were the most eloquent of men who had, with great vehemence, urged them to trust in God. Thank God, faith, as well as unbelief, is contagious! And if—

*“One sickly sheep infects the flock,*

*And poisons all the rest”—*  
there is another side to that Truth—one true Believer tends to strengthen all the rest and to make them “strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.” He who can sing as he goes to battle, if he is a leader, is likely to lead a tribe of heroes in his train! He who can sing in the time of shipwreck is likely to put courage into everyone of the crew, so that they do their best for the laboring vessel and, if it is possible, bring her safely into the haven. Sing, then, Brother! Sing, my Sister, for this will prove your child-like confidence in God, your implicit reliance upon Him!

That is a second commendation of David’s mode of action. The next is that by continuing to praise Jehovah in the presence of the idols, he declared his all-absorbing zeal for God’s Glory. He did not need to stand up and say, “I love the Lord with all my heart.” Hear him sing, “I will praise You with my whole heart.” See what force he puts into every note! Listen to his jubilant song—you can tell by the very sound of his voice that his praise of Jehovah comes up from his heart—and from his whole heart. He is enthusiastic, he is full of confidence! If he had a doubt concerning Jehovah, he could not sing like that. And if he were lukewarm, he would not sing like that. But, as he is singing with his whole heart, those who are opposed to him say to themselves, “It is no use to trouble ourselves about that man—we shall never turn him from the faith.” They will sheer off, one by one, knowing that it is no use to attack such a firm Believer. He who praises God with his whole heart is like a man on fire—he is terrible to the adversaries of the Most High. When the great Spanish Armada was ready to swoop down upon the English coast, our brave Admiral Drake took some of his small ships and placed them where the wind would carry them right among the Spanish fleet. He filled the vessels with combustible material and set them afire. Then he had no need to go, himself, for the wind just took the fire-ships and drifted them up against the Spanish galleons that floated high out of the water—and exposed a vast surface to the air—and one and another of the big unwieldy monsters were soon on fire—and a great victory was won without a blow being struck!  
So, I like to get a red-hot Christian full of music and praise unto Jehovah and just let him go, by the influence of the Holy Spirit, right into the middle of the adversaries of the Truth of God! They cannot make him out! They do not know how to handle a man on fire! If he would try to argue with them, they might overwhelm him with their logic. If he would fire a shot at them, they could shoot back at him. But he does nothing of the kind. He simply blazes and burns to the Glory of God—and that is a most effective mode of warfare with the Lord’s enemies. Suppose, my Brothers and Sisters, that you were to have your hearts all on fire, burning and glowing with the intense conviction that the Gospel is true and that the God of Heaven and earth is the one living and true God—and that the atoning blood of the Divine Savior is the one hope of guilty sinners? Then you might do grand work for God! Tolerate no doubt in your spirit! Believe right up to the hilt with unstaggering confidence and then sing out your praises of Jehovah with a joyful confidence! Those who hate the Truth of God will not know what to make of you. They will probably get out of your way as quickly as possible, but, if they do not, then perhaps you will set them on fire and it may be, by the Grace of God, that you will burn up some of their errors and put them into a terrible state of confusion and anxiety if they still resolve to fight against the Lord of Hosts!  
It was a wise plan, this of David, of getting in among the heathen gods and singing to the praise of Jehovah! They could not understand him, but they were affected by his singing all the same. If he could have walked through any temple where all the idol gods could have been gathered together, and if he could have sung, there, the words of our grand Doxology—  
*“Praise God from whom all blessings flow, Praise Him all creatures here below,  
Praise Him above, you heavenly host,  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost”—*  
I would not have wondered if old Dagon had come tumbling down to the ground and if Chemosh, and Milcom, and Baal, and Ashtaroth and all those other abominations of the heathen had fallen prone upon the earth at the sound of this glorious song of praise unto Jehovah! Therefore, if we would overthrow the idols of our own day, let us imitate this wise mode of action on the part of the Psalmist.  
I believe, also, that David was quite right in singing with all his heart before the idol gods because it would shield him from all danger wherever he went. To walk among the wicked is a dangerous exercise. It is as though a man had to go into infected air, or traverse the wards of a leper hospital—he is, himself, apt to become affected by the poisonous atmosphere and to become infected with some deadly malady. But, oh, if you keep on, with all your heart, praising God all the day, you may go with confidence wherever duty calls you! Ah, you might go between the jaws of death, itself, and yet suffer no injury, for an atmosphere of praise would be the best deodorizer and disinfectant wherever you might be bid by the Lord to go. As long as you kept on praising God and magnifying His holy name, no adversary could do you any harm. Remember how the hosts of Jehoshaphat triumphed in the valley of Berachah when they began to sing praises unto God—then were their adversaries routed! Remember, also, how Paul and Silas could not be held in bonds when, at midnight, they sang praises unto God! Then the prison rocked, the chains were broken and the doors flew open, for there must be liberty where men can sing unto Jehovah! Where wholehearted songsters continually adore the Most High, the prisoners’ fetters snap and the foundations of dungeons are moved! Therefore, dear Friends, mind that you keep up the spirit of praise.  
I used to know, years ago, a poor old laboring man. He was a Methodist of the good old-fashioned school. I never met him, or spoke with him without finding that, wherever he was, he was always singing. He was up in the morning at half-past five to get out to his farm work and he sang while he was dressing. He sang as he pulled on his corduroys. He sang as he put on his smock. He sang as he walked downstairs, he sang as he tramped off down the street and he sang all day as he was at his work. He did not keep on singing while I was preaching, but he seemed almost as if he wanted to do that. And, every now and then, he would burst out with, “Hallelujah!” or, “Praise the Lord!” He was so full of thanksgiving to God that sometimes he was obliged to give expression to his feelings even when it would have been more proper if he had kept quiet! He was one of the holiest men I ever knew and I used to account very much for his simple gentleness, integrity and happiness by the habit he had acquired of constantly singing the praises of God. He worked with some men who were in the habit of swearing, but he kept on singing and, after a time, they began to think that it was not the right thing for them to swear. He went among men who drank, but he never left off singing and, somehow, even among such men, there was a kind of respect for him. It was so with all who knew him. His employer tried to put him where he would have easier tasks than others as he grew old. And everybody loved him.

I always wished that he had been a Baptist—that would have been just the finishing touch to make him perfect—and then we would have lost him, for all perfect people go to Heaven at once! But if I mentioned that subject to him—and sometimes I did—it was not long before he began to sing and he would ask me to join him, which I gladly did. His was a happy way of living. I wish that I and all of you could rise to it. Perhaps somebody says, “That good man was a very happy, gracious soul, but still he was very childish.” Perhaps so, but I would like to be just as he was. I do not speak of him as having been childish, but childlike, always praising God like a happy child who is always singing. You know, dear Friends, you can keep on praising the Lord whatever else you may be doing. You can sit down in your house with the needle in your hand, or go abroad into the garden with the hoe and still be praising God. We do not have half enough of praise, Brothers and Sisters—I am sure the devil would be more angry with us it we would begin to praise God more—and since we certainly are under no obligations to Satan to keep from irritating his temper, let us sing unto the Lord as long as we live— and defy the devil to do his worst! As he likes neither music nor song in praise of Jehovah, let him have plenty of them both! Let us continually do as David declared that he would—“I will praise You with my whole heart: before the gods (or before the devils, before the kings or before the beggars, before the drunks, before the swearers, before anybody and everybody) will I sing praise unto You.”  
That, then, was the first part of David’s action—singing unto Jehovah with whole-hearted praise.  
II. The second thing that David did was to WORSHIP BY THE DESPISED RULE. Even in the presence of those who set up their idol gods, and their false systems, he declared to Jehovah, “I will worship toward Your holy Temple.”  
Some said, “Worship this way.” Others said, “Worship that way.” In the present day some say that the Old Testament is not Inspired, that there is much that is very doubtful in the five Books of Moses. Some are going to worship in one way, some in another way of their own inventing. But if we are of David’s mind, we shall say to the Lord, “I will worship toward Your holy Temple.” Let every other man have his own way of worshipping if he will, but, Brothers and Sisters, as for me, I say to the Lord, with David, “I will worship toward Your holy Temple.”  
I admire this declaration, first, because it is a quiet way of ignoring all will-worship. “Oh,” says one, “I am resolved to worship God with all kinds of show, ceremony, flowers and millinery.” Another says, “I intend to worship God out in the fields and never to mingle with His people at all.” Very well, you go your own ways, but I ignore both of your ways, for my way is to worship toward God’s holy Temple—that is the way in which the Apostles and the early Christians worshipped Christ, not forsaking the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some is—the way in which they cheered their own hearts and the hearts of their fellow Believers, with Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs—the way in which they spoke as the Spirit gave them utterance—the way in which they gathered around the Table of their Lord to remember His great love to them. You may go and set up whatever novelty you like, but I shall keep

to that— *“Good old way, by our fathers trod”—*  
and I trust that every true child of God will make this personal declaration to the Lord, “I will worship toward Your holy Temple.”

What did David mean by that expression, “Your holy Temple”? Well, the Temple, like the Tabernacle in the wilderness, was typical of the adorable Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was not that the tent in the wilderness or the Temple on Mount Zion was anything of itself—these were the places where God was especially pleased to reveal Himself. Now, today the Temple of Jehovah is the body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ which He, Himself, expressly called “the Temple.” Let others worship saints and angels, if they will, but we will worship the Incarnate Christ and Him, alone! Let others worship the man and think him nothing more than man, but we shall worship Christ as God. I was delighted to sing with you, a little while ago—

*“Jesus, my God! I know His name,  
His name is all my trust!  
Nor will He put my soul to shame,  
Nor let my hope be lost.”*

Jesus is not only my Savior, but He is also my God! And my prayers are to be presented to the Father through Him and to come up unto the Most High through the Person of the God-Man, the Mediator between God and men, Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior! I will worship toward that shrine, the Person of the Son of God and God the Son!

But the Temple was also the place of sacrifice and we shall only praise God aright as we trust to the one great Sacrifice. Oh, how many, nowadays, deny the great Truth of vicarious suffering, the substitutionary Sacrifice of Christ on Calvary, saying that He is our Exemplar, but not the Maker of propitiation and reconciliation by His blood. Well, do not trouble your head about these people and begin to argue with them, but say, “As for me, ‘I will worship toward Your holy Temple.’ I have not any hope of my prayers speeding except through the Sacrifice of Christ upon the Cross. I can have no assurance of being accepted by God unless I am ‘accepted in the Beloved.’ So I will offer no prayer but that which goes to God by the crimson road of the substitutionary death of Christ. ‘I will worship toward Your holy Temple.’” Keep to that declaration with unshaken firmness of resolve and it will be the best answer that you can give to the idols, or to the devils, or to anyone else who may oppose the Most High.

III. Now notice, thirdly, what David did. He went on from singing and worshipping to PRAISE THE QUESTIONED ATTRIBUTES—the very attributes which are being questioned in this present age. “I will praise Your name for Your loving kindness and for Your Truth.”

The true Believer should praise God, first, for His loving kindness and for that loving kindness in its universality. Some say that the God whom we preach cannot be a God of Love because He banishes unbelievers into endless misery. If they refuse His Son, He gives them no hope that there can be any hereafter for them except that of eternal banishment from His Presence and from the glory of His power. “The wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the nations that forget God.” And there are some preachers who cover up and try to hide this solemn Truth of God, or speak as if they had velvet in their mouths when they come to deal with it. I shall not do so! By God’s Grace, I shall never do so! There is enough love in God to satisfy me and I shall not need to make another god in order that I may believe in his loving kindness! My heart delights to praise the very Jehovah of whom the Psalmist sings, “To Him that smote Egypt in their first-born: for His mercy endures forever: and brought out Israel from among them: for His mercy endures forever: with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm: for His mercy endures forever. To Him which divided the Red Sea into parts: for His mercy endures forever: and made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for His mercy endures forever: but overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea: for His mercy endures forever.”

I am quite certain that He never executes judgment with a severity which will be questioned by right minds. And in the Last Great Day, when the whole of this dispensation is wound up, it will be seen that “God is Love.” We may not be able to see it now—He may seem to be, as David says in another Psalm, “terrible out of His holy places.” Jehovah Himself declares that He is a jealous God who will by no means clear the guilty—and there are many who quibble at that, but the Day shall declare it. When the veil is rolled up, to the astonishment of all God’s creatures, it will be seen that He did the best, the wisest and the kindest thing which, all things considered, could have been done and, therefore, though I cannot yet understand all His dealings with the sons of men, yet I believe that they are right and I will praise His name for His loving kindness!

There is a special note, here, which bids us think of God’s loving kindness in its specialty. Many quibble at this great Truth of God which seems to me to be self-evident—that Christ should choose His own spouse. They want to have entrusted to them the selection of a bride for Him! They want God to be lackey to the free will of man and that none of His purposes should be carried out unless man permits it! Their notion is that the great Creator must sit and wait till He gets His creature’s permission to be gracious. But as for us, Beloved, we adore the glorious Truth of His electing love. We admire the sovereignty of His Grace and we delight to know that He does as He wills among the inhabitants of this lower world and deals out His mercy, as Paul puts it, “according to the good pleasure of His will.” Instead of disputing with idols, or devils, we begin to sing with all our heart concerning the special love of God to His chosen and the favor which He bears towards them that put their trust in Him! We cannot employ our time to better purpose—to argue and debate might be a waste of effort and might depress our own spirit. But to bless the name of the Lord will do us good and will also be to His honor and Glory!

I find that the original bears another meaning—“I will praise Your name for Your Grace, and for Your Truth.” Is it not a blessed thing to have that word, “Grace,” always in the mouth? “Grace.” Is it not one of the sweetest words that God ever permitted human lips to utter? And we often say, “Free Grace,” even if some tell us that is tautology. If one tap of the hammer will not suffice, we will give two. If men do not understand what, “Grace,” means, we will call it, “Free Grace” and we will bless and praise the name of the Lord that we have two such words in the language as, “Free Grace!”

The other attribute for which David said that he would praise the name of the Lord is, God’s Truth. Our heart may well be sad as we see how men are pecking at God’s Truth. One part of the Bible is given up by one and another part is rejected by another. One of our wise men says, “I have given up all the Old Testament and a large part of the New.” Well, Sir, you might just as well give it all up, because you evidently have no part nor lot in it, or else you would not talk like that! Those gentlemen who want to mend the Bible really need mending themselves! That is where the mischief lies in most cases. If they were savingly converted by the Grace of God, they would love every letter of the Book, from Genesis to Revelation, and find it food to their souls. But they do not know the inner meaning of it and, therefore, they despise the Scripture as being but husks to them. And I greatly fear that is all that it is to many of them. But as for us, we shall glory in God’s Truth—in the historic accuracy of every Word of this blessed old Bible! In the absolute Truth of God of everything that is recorded here! In the certainty of the fulfillment of every promise and every threat that is in this Book! And, what is more, in the absolute correctness of every unfulfilled prophecy as being just as certain as certainty itself! There is where we mean to stand!

We believe in plenary verbal Inspiration, with all its difficulties, for there are not half as many difficulties in that Doctrine as there are in any other kind of inspiration that men may imagine. If this Book is not the real solid foundation of our religion, what have we to build upon? If God has spoken a lie, where are we, Brothers and Sisters? And if this Book, for which the martyrs bled, and which sustained our sires in prison and on their deathbeds—if this precious Book which is today hugged to the heart of many a dying saint—is to be torn away from us, it shall not go without a struggle in which we will, if necessary, sacrifice even our lives! We will never give up the Bible! We will love it in life and in death, and we will still believe that it is the glorious and perfect Revelation, as far as our imperfect minds can discern it, of the loving kindness and Truth of God! And for it we will praise and bless His holy name!

This is what David said he would do, and I recommend all tried saints to do the same.  
IV. Now, fourthly, there was another thing which David meant to do and that was to REVERENCE GOD’S WORD TO THE HIGHEST DEGREE. He puts it thus. “You have magnified Your Word above all Your name.” My text is such a great one that I need half-a-dozen nights to discuss it, so I can only give you hints of what I would say if I had the time.  
God’s name, dear Friends, is revealed in a measure in Nature. In Providence that name may be spelt out, but David tells us, here, that the Lord has magnified His Word above all His name. That is to say that Revelation is made by God to be infinitely superior to Creation and to Providence as a revealing of Himself, for, first, it is more clear. If a man paints grand pictures, even if I never saw the man, I know a little about him when I see his paintings. Yes, but if he writes me a letter and in that letter tells me what is in his very heart, I know more about him by his words than I do by his works! And there is more of God in some passages of the Bible than in the whole universe besides! If science could be all known, it would not contain as much real Light of God as there is in a single verse of Scripture, for the best Light of God is in the Word! There is other light, too, but it is only moonlight as compared with the sunlight. God has magnified His Word, for its clearness, above every other method of revealing His name or Character.  
It is not only more clear, but it is also more sure. If we look into God’s works, one man sees one thing and another man sees another. But if you look into God’s Word and you have a childlike spirit, you will see what another childlike-spirited man sees. If you are God’s child, you will see what others of God’s children see there. And in the great fundamental Truths discoverable in His Word, the saints are almost entirely agreed. The whole universe is not big enough to mirror God in all His Glory. If He looks into the great and wide sea that He has made, the glass is too small to reflect more than a part of His Glory. Suppose that God should reveal Himself fully in Nature? It would soon be seen that the axles of the wheel would be all too weak to sustain the weight of Deity! It is only Revelation that can truly manifest Him to us.  
Think again—God’s Word is more lasting than His other works. The Revelation of God in Nature is not unique. If He has made one world, He can make another. If He has made one universe, He can make 50 universes! But after having given us one complete Revelation of His will, He will never give another—that one stands alone. What God has made known in the book of Nature will all pass away—there will come a day when the elements, themselves, shall be dissolved with fervent heat and, like a worn-out vesture, all this material creation shall be put away. But, “the Word of the Lord endures forever. And this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you,” so that God magnifies His Word by making it everlasting. “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Words shall not pass away.”  
Does not God magnify His Word in your hearts, dear Friends? You have sometimes been in the fields on the Sabbath and a sweet sense of rest has stolen over you. In the time of harvest, or on a bright morning when the sun has risen, you have been overwhelmed with a sense of the Glory of God. But, still, that sweet feeling never comes to the heart so as to affect its secret springs like a passage out of Scripture! A promise from God will cast more light into your soul than all the beauties of sea and land! I do not for a moment depreciate the wondrous Glory of God in all His works, but, still, I do say God is seen better in His Word than in all His works besides—and He has magnified His Word above all His name! They say that we ought to alter Scripture because scientists have found out something or other. Yes, I know all about that kind of talk! Scientists found out many things years ago and within 10 years somebody else rose up and found out that they were all wrong! The history of so-called philosophy is the history of fools! And the philosophers of this day are no more right than those of 50 years ago. The men are coming to the front who will confute the positive assertions of the present and, when they have made their own assertions, and made their bow, another set of wise men will be coming after them to confound them! They are all as the grass that withers, but, “the Word of the Lord endures forever.” It has been tried in the furnace of earth, purified seven times and here it remains— still the pure refined metal—and in this will we glory and not be ashamed!  
V. Lastly, David was going to PROVE ALL BY HIS OWN EXPERIENCE. A bit of experience is the best thing with which to close up my discourse. “In the day when I cried, You answered me, and strengthened me with strength in my soul.”  
Ah, Brothers and Sisters, men say that facts are stubborn things, and so they are. And when a man once gets a fact with regard to the religion of Jesus Christ, he becomes a stubborn man. The man who is in the habit of praying to God and who is in the habit of having answers to his prayers—the man who lives a life of prayer and consequently who is enriched by innumerable mercies, says to those who deny the efficacy of prayer—“You may say what you like, but you cannot trouble us about this matter, because I am daily testing and daily proving in my own experience what prayer can accomplish.” “Well,” they say, “you did not get out of the trouble. You prayed, but you did not escape from it.” That is quite true, I did not. But God strengthened me with strength in my soul and it is a grand thing when the mind becomes calm, when the soul grows strong, when courage increases, when confidence comes, when deep peace and quiet restfulness flow into the soul! All that is a blessed answer to prayer and as long as God gives us that, we cannot desert His standard, or deny His faithfulness and His Truth! Let those who will, go and leave the snows of Lebanon, and the pure flowing river of God for the broken cisterns that can hold no water, or for the muddy waters of Egypt—but we cannot, we dare not, we will not! God helping us, we will stand fast in our belief in the power of prayer! We have tried it, we have proved it and we are not to be shaken from our confidence in its efficacy!  
The Lord give to everyone of you who do not, at present know it, to prove it yourselves, to try it to your heart’s joy and satisfaction—and you, also, shall stand fast in your confidence in Him even to the end! The Lord bless you, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 138.**

Verse 1. I will praise You with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto You. “Gods or no gods, whatever they may be, ‘I will praise You with my whole heart.’ I will not be ashamed to declare my confidence in Jehovah, whoever may listen to me.”

2. I will worship toward Your holy Temple, and praise Your name for Your loving kindness and for Your Truth: for You have magnified Your Word above all Your name. Now was his time to speak. The gods of the heathen had their worshippers. Then should Jehovah be deserted by His loyal subjects? “No,” says David, “I will worship You, and I will praise You, whoever may oppose me.”

3. In the day when I cried, You answered me, and strengthened me with strength in my soul. What worshipper of idols could ever say that of his god? “Ears have they,” but they hear not the cries of their worshippers. “Hands have they,” but they cannot deliver those who cry to them. “Feet have they,” but they cannot come to the help of their votaries. But David declares that God had heard him in the day of his trouble and strengthened him with strength in his soul.

4. All the kings of the earth shall praise You, O Lord, when they hear the Words of Your mouth. He felt that he had had such good things to say concerning God, such blessed Words of God to make known, that even the kings of the earth, when they began to listen to him, would become attentive and would even become converts—and begin to praise Jehovah with him.

5. Yes, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord: for great is the Glory of the Lord. Think of that—kings singing in the ways of the Lord! Crowned princes becoming choristers in God’s service. Someone has said that there are few in Heaven who wore crowns on earth. And I am afraid it is true that of all who are crowned on earth, few ever get to that land where all are kings and priests unto God. To have a crown on earth and a crown above is a rare thing! But David says that these kings “shall sing in the ways of Jehovah: for great is the Glory of Jehovah,” and they shall be overpowered by that Glory—melted, subdued, wooed, won, converted by its power!

6, 7. Though the Lord is high, yet has He respect unto the lowly: but the proud He knows afar off. Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me. He was a king, yet he expected trouble. And do you complain when it comes to your cottage, after it had been to David’s palace? “Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me.”

7. You shall stretch forth Your hand against the wrath of my enemies, and Your right hand shall save me. He expected, first, to be revived, and afterwards to be protected. He believed that God would stretch out His hand, as men do when they make a supreme effort, and put forth all their force—“You shall stretch forth Your hand against the wrath of my enemies.” David also expected ultimate preservation—“‘Your right hand shall save me.’ You will do it dexterously, readily, gladly, will You do it. ‘Your right hand shall save me.’”

8. The LORD will perfect that which concerns me. “All that has to do with me—my business, my family, my work, my temporal and my eternal interests—‘that which concerns me,’ and that which troubles me, moves my heart with the deepest concern, Jehovah will perfect.”

8. Your mercy, O LORD, endures forever: forsake not the works of Your own hands. And He will not do it! He will carry on unto completion the work which He has begun, blessed be His holy name!

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SINGING IN THE WAYS OF THE LORD  
NO. 1615

**DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, AUGUST 11, 1881, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Yes, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord:  
for great is the glory of the Lord.”  
Psalm 138:5.**

ACCORDING to the context, this is spoken of kings. “All the kings of the earth shall praise You, O Lord, when they hear the words of Your mouth. Yes, they shall sing in the ways of the Lord.” It will be a novel spectacle to see kings singing in the ways of the Lord! As a rule, they have not much troubled themselves with singing, but they have often troubled those who love the ways of God and opposed them, both by their laws and by their example. There will yet be another order of things in the earth! These days will be shortened for the elect’s sake and the time shall come when kings shall fall down before the King of kings and all people shall call Jesus blessed! Oh that the time may speedily arrive when a choir of kings shall, with loud voices, magnify the name of the Lord!

Well, dear Brothers and Sisters, that time has not come yet and, therefore, let us sing all the more. If the kings have not begun to sing, let us sing! And well we may. We have full permission to do it, for the next verse encourages us—“Though the Lord is high, yet has He respect unto the lowly.” He will be just as pleased with the song of the peasant as with that of the prince—with the Psalm of the workman as with that of the monarch! We, too, may come, though obscure and unknown, and we may bring our two mites which make a farthing—and if they are all the praise our soul can give—the Lord will count that we have not given less than kings themselves!

Let us make up for royal silence. If others cannot praise God and speak well of His name, yet let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He has redeemed out of the hands of the enemy! If we do not speak, surely the stones of the street will cry out against us! Therefore I shall take the text and use it in reference to ourselves, believing that for us this promise stands fast, “They shall sing in the ways of the Lord: for great is the glory of the Lord.”

I. We shall discuss the text under four observations, the first of which is the text itself—“THEY SHALL SING IN THE WAYS OF THE LORD.” That is to say, first, gracious persons take pleasure in the things of religion. A man’s religion is worth nothing if it is not his chief delight. That which we do before God as task work is ill done and is not acceptable. God will not have slaves to grace His Throne! Nor would He be served by us in the spirit of bondage. It is His delight to be served by sons and daughters and to be waited upon by those who do His commandments with delight. If your pleasure is not in the ways of the Lord, then, surely, you cannot know much about those ways. You must be a stranger to them and you must be walking in paths which may look like the ways of God, but are not really so.

I do not say that those who know the Lord are always happy, but I say that they are always “the seed that the Lord God has blessed.” I may not say that we are always pleasurable in heart in the ways of wisdom, but I will say of the ways of wisdom, themselves, that they are pleasantness and that all its paths are peace. Yes, Brothers and Sisters, we do not groan out our religion! We do not go to our places of worship as slaves went to the calaboose to be flogged! I do see some each Sunday who look dreadfully solemn and they walk to their places of worship as if they were going to the gallows and never expected to come back alive—but that is not the spirit in which I would have you go up to the House of God! Go with lightly tripping feet, saying—

*“I have been there and still will go  
‘Tis like a little Heaven below.”*

I would not be kept away, or bought out of the House of God by all that could be offered me. I believe that Sunday should be spent in recreation! You are dreadfully shocked and well you may be—but what do I mean by, “recreation”? It means creating us over anew! Oh, that everybody who talks about spending Sunday in recreation would know the meaning of the word, “recreation,” and would come to be re-created, regenerated, renewed, refreshed, invigorated, strengthened, revived and made to rejoice in God! The Lord’s Day is the highest hill of the week! On that day we stand on tiptoe on Pisgah and look to “the rest which remains for the people of God!” It is the type of that everlasting Sabbath which remains for the people of God.

Now, as it is with Sabbath-keeping and going up to the House of God— that there we sing in God’s ways, so it is with all God’s ways—they are all full of delight to His people! Those who heartily enter into them are happy people. “Blessed are the people in whose heart are Your ways.” Their heart shall be full of joy and overflowing with delight. Hence it follows, next, that they do not go out of God’s ways to get their songs. They shall sing in the ways. Alas! I have heard of some who go here and there, as they say, “to get a little pleasure.” What? What? Do I understand you? You find no pleasure in the ways of God? Then, Friend, you are a hypocrite! That is plain English—for he that is really in God’s ways finds his pleasure there. That is his chief delight and he can sing, as our hymn puts it—

*“I need not go abroad for joys,  
I have a feast at home!  
My sighs are turned into songs,  
My heart has ceased to roam.”*

Do you call that man a loving husband who says, “Well, you know, you must go away from home sometimes just to have a little pleasure. You cannot always be in the company of your wife and children. You must go from home to get a little pleasure.” That is a bad fellow! I am very sorry for his wife and children. A bad lot. I am sure he is. And he who talks about being married to Christ and joined to His Church—and then says that he goes elsewhere to find his pleasure—is a traitor! I shake my head about him! I am afraid that I may have to break my heart over him one of these days. When you see professors seeking pleasure in sin and worldliness, there is something rotten at the core! True men of God shall sing in the ways of the Lord and find something to sing of while they are in those ways.

It means, too, that they sing as they are actively engaged in the ways of the Lord. That is to say, while they are engaged in the service of God their hearts are joyous and glad. They do not stop the work to go and sing, but they sing as they work! Sailors, when they pull a rope, make a cheery sound. As they heave the anchor they sing after their fashion. Soldiers march to battle with sounds of trumpet and the beat of drums, listening to music while they march. So Christians go on their pilgrimage and keep step to the sound of joyous Psalms and hymns. They sing in the ways of the Lord. But sometimes the ways of the Lord call for difficult service. Gracious men may have to visit sick and desponding persons. Surely, if they are of any use to the sick, their hearts will sing even while they are sympathizing with them.

They have to talk with those who are anxious and to lead them to the Savior. And I believe there is no way of doing it so well as by showing them the peace which Jesus gives. Perhaps Believers are called to plow fields that seem barren. Yes, but they must still do it! They must be singing as they break the clods; singing as they plow and singing as they sow the Seed of God! That is the best way to do it. They shall sing in the ways of the Lord when those ways call for prayer. Song and prayer are like butter and honey, a royal mixture.

I have heard that of old, in America, the principal day of the year was a day of fasting until some good Divine said that since God had brought the Puritans from England and landed them in a wilderness, but fed them till the wilderness became a garden. And since He had multiplied their numbers till they had become a great nation, He thought it was time that they kept a day of thanksgiving and so they have done ever since! A day of prayer should be a day of thanksgiving, too. Saints sing in the ways of earnest prayer. It never dampens the ardor of intercession to give thanks unto the Most High. Whatever you are doing for the Lord, whether it is distributing tracts or teaching the young, mix holy joy with it! I may say of thanksgiving to God what was said of salt in the Bible—“Salt, without prescribing how much.” Set no limit to it! Nobody ever sings the high praises of God too often or too heartily! “They shall sing in the ways.” And when the ways get very tough and become the paths of sufferings—and the pains are frequent and incessant—then still sing!

No music that goes up to the Throne of God is sweeter in Jehovah’s ears than the song of suffering saints. They shall praise Him upon their beds and sing His high praises in the fire! To go right through the Valley of the Shadow of Death and sing all the way. To climb Hill Difficulty and to sing up its crags—to pass by Giant Grim and even by the Castle of Giant Despair and through the Enchanted Ground and still keep singing— and to come to the river’s brink and descend into it still singing is lovely in a Christian! May the statutes of the Lord be our songs in the house of our pilgrimage till we mount to sing above!

Once more, under this first head, I think, dear Brothers and Sisters, that the children of God sing in the ways of God because they are in a cage for singing—in a right state of mind for singing. When we are in the ways of the Lord, dear Friends, we are strong—“They go from strength to strength.” When we walk as God would have us walk, we are made strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Limping pilgrims cannot sing, but those whose weakness casts itself upon the strength of God can. Do you know how strong you are? I will be bound to say you are better acquainted with the other question—how weak are you? But do you know how strong you are when God is with you? Why, you are irresistible! The belt of faith girds a man with strength that is only equaled by Omnipotence!

If the Lord is with you, what can stand against you? If God strengthens you, you shall run without weariness; you shall walk without fainting and sometimes you shall even mount as upon the wings of eagles! Well may that pilgrim sing who is made strong by the mighty God of Jacob. You have safety, also, for in the ways of the Lord all His servants are protected from danger. On the king’s highway “no lion shall be there, neither shall any ravenous beast go up thereon.” You shall be “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation” in the ways of the Lord. Well may that traveler sing who is perfectly safe! He holds his tongue if there are thieves about and robbers likely to pounce upon him. But when he feels that he is under the guardian care of the Lord of the Ways who has given His angels charge over him to keep him—yes, when he feels that the Lord, Himself, is round about him like a wall of fire—he must sing in the ways! Strength and safety are ours and, therefore, let us sing!

Saints also sing in the ways of God because they have guidance. He that does not know whether he is in the right way or not may well be silent, but he that is sure about his road—yes, sure about it even to his journey’s end—may well sing in the ways! We have One with us who will lead us into all the Truths of God—we have the Comforter with us who will direct our ways even to the end—how can we keep from singing? Pilgrims bound to Zion’s city who have such a Conductor as the Infallible Spirit of God ought to sing! It would be treason on their part if they did not! Strength, safety, guidance—surely these should make us glad.

And then, besides that, we have provision all along the road. The pilgrim who does not know where he will lodge at night feels a little anxious. But if he knows where there is an inn, or where he has a friend, he goes along right cheerily. I know nothing about my way to Heaven from this spot to Heaven’s gate—but this I do know—there are places of refreshment provided for God’s weary pilgrims every day and every night until we enter into the great mansion of God above. “He makes me to lie down in green pastures: He leads me beside the still waters.” Perhaps we shall halt at Elim, where there are wells and palm trees. But if we do not come to Elim, we shall rest somewhere else. There is sure to be a place of shelter for the saints in every night of their travel. Therefore do we sing in the ways of the Lord, for our pasture is on all high places. It is a way of abundant provision and we may well sing, for the Lord continually fills our hearts with gratitude.

As we journey on in the ways of the Lord, fresh streams of comfort come to us from one earthly source and another, but chiefly from the great Source of everlasting consolation, even from Christ Jesus, Himself. I can speak well of the ways of the Lord and earnestly stir up all my fellow pilgrims to sing in them, for they have been good ways to me. Let us march on and sing on! Let us proceed with a step and a song, a step and a song! Let our halting places be charmed with sacred Psalmody and may the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, abide with us and keep us singing the praises of God! That is the first observation—“they shall sing in the ways.”

II. But I find that Dr. Gill gives another reading of the text, “THEY SHALL SING OF THE WAYS OF THE LORD,” that is true doctrine and an admissible translation and so we will dwell upon it. “They shall sing of the ways of the Lord.” Not only are God’s ways the place of their song but the subject of their song. How shall we sing of the ways of the Lord? We will arrange them under two heads. We will sing of God’s ways to us and we will sing of our ways which lead us to God. We will sing of God’s ways to us, but where shall we begin? Shall we begin where God began with us? With that eternal council chamber—with that Divine Predestination—with that secret decree of salvation by which He separated His people from the mass of the world and made them to be His before the earth was?

Here is a grand beginning! We will sing of the eternal ways of God in His purpose and decrees before time began! But then we shall have to sing of God’s actual ways when the time for the fulfillment of the purpose came—of the Covenant and all its provisions—of the Incarnate God descending to the manger. We shall have to sing of that same Incarnate God opening His heart to pour out the purchase price of our redemption! Oh, the ways of the Lord with us through Christ Jesus and through the Spirit who was given because Jesus ascended to His Father and to your Father! What a subject!

Then we will sing of the ways of God in the application of Redemption to us, His people—how He convinced us of sin and led us to the Savior— and how, since then, He has led us by a right way, helped us, comforted us, chastened us, directed us, opened all His rich treasures to us, communed with us, told us the very secret of His soul, wiped our tears away, removed our fears, charmed our hearts! This is a long, long story, and each Believer sees a new phase of it in his own experience. Surely, the mere hints I have given are enough to show that we may well sing of the ways of the Lord! And you never need be ashamed to sing of those ways. David says, “Then will I teach transgressors Your ways.” God’s ways are such gracious ways, such wise ways, such holy ways, such ways of wisdom and of lovingkindness, that in any company we may talk about them and in every place we may sing of them! We will sing of the ways of the Lord with us.

But then the next thing, and the main thing in this particular passage, is to sing of our ways to God. What is there to sing of with respect to those ways of God by which we come to Him? I think that there is everything in them to sing about! For one, I am so glad that I am in the ways of the Lord when I remember where I once was. As a dear Brother said in prayer before this service began, what a mercy to be plucked like a brand from the burning! The saddest saint is, after all, happier than the most glad sinner! The best house in the City of Destruction, where everything is to be burnt with fire, is not equal to the poorest shanty on the road to Heaven, where, if the pilgrim fares hard, he is on the way to Glory! When we think of where we used to be—of the city from where we came. When we think of Egypt and the iron furnace, the bondage and the slavery from which God has brought us out with a high hand and an outstretched arm—why, we ought to sing in the ways of the Lord!

But, then, it is not only where we came from, but it is where we are going that should make us sing in the ways of the Lord. When Philip Henry, the father of Matthew Henry, was a preacher of the Gospel and a young man, he set his affection upon a young lady who was an heiress. Her father said, “Mr. Henry is, no doubt, a good man, and a scholar and a gentleman, but he is a poor man. And I would have you remember that we hardly know where he came from.” “Oh! Father,” said the young lady, “but I know where he is going and he is going where I should like to go with him. Do not let that stand in the way.” And it did not!

That is the point about all God’s people. We know where we are going and we can sing in the ways of God because we know where the road ends. Unconverted men and women, every step you take, you are a step nearer Hell. It is a very solemn thought, but I want you to remember it. Every hour that you unconverted people live, you are an hour nearer to the pit that burns with the wrath of God! Oh, I pray you, think of that! But the man who is a Believer is on a road which brings him, every step,

 nearer Heaven! I do not know a sweeter hymn than that which we sometimes sing—

*“And nightly pitch our moving tent*

*A day’s march nearer Home.”*  
And what a Home it is! Oh, if our way Home lay through 7,000 Hells, yet the end would be worth it! If we had to pass through deaths as many as the hairs of our head, yet five minutes with Christ would make up for all our pain! I am sure that it is so! Let us, therefore, press forward singing, because we are getting nearer to the place where song shall be our element forever.

They shall sing of the ways of the Lord because they know where they come from and where they are going. But about the ways themselves. Well, we sing of them because it is a good road. The road to Heaven is a splendid road and it has had some fine travelers on it. The way the holy Prophets went. The road that leads from banishment. The King’s highway of holiness. I’ll go, for all His paths are peace. The glory of that way is that the Prince Emmanuel trod it! With sorrowful steps He traversed that way and He has left the prints of His pierced feet all along it—it is for us to feel that it must be a good way—since holy men and their glorious leader have walked it. It is a way in which many who are very dear to us have gone— some of whom have reached the end of it now. Some of us can track the footprints of a grandfather, a grandmother, uncles and aunts. We rejoice to be going to Heaven with father, mother, friends, relatives and dear ones whom we cherish. The way is good enough for them—I am sure it is good enough for us!

Lately our modern divines have pretended to improve the road. They have taken up the stones and laid down a rotten wood pavement which is very slippery for pilgrims! But we will have none of their nonsense. The road that was good enough for Whitefield and Wesley is quite good enough for me! And the road that suited John Bunyan and the Puritans is quite to my mind. These modern ways are a modern nuisance and I would like to see them deserted forever. We can do better with the good old way than with any of these refinements—

*“We are going forth with our staff in hand, Thro’ a desert wild in a stranger land.  
But our faith is bright and our hope is strong, And the Good Old Way is our pilgrim song, ‘Tis the Good Old Way, that our fathers trod, ‘Tis the Way of Life, and it leads to God.*

***‘Tis the only path to the realms of day,***

*We are going home in the Good Old Way.”*We love to sing of the way because there is good company in it. No company in the world is equal to that of those who are going on pilgrimage to Heaven. If I meet with any who are not going there, I can enjoy their talent and their interesting conversation, but their talk is poor, after all. We say when the conversation is over, “That was a fine gentleman and he made merry company, but it did us no good. Better far to get with half a dozen godly old women at a cottage meeting than waste time with him.”

Let us meet with those who talk about Jesus Christ and experimental godliness, however ungrammatical their language may be, sooner than sit with the greatest of worldlings whose conversation lacks a savor of Christ! Go you in the ways with a song, because there is such good company to sing with. And there is such good accommodation on the road. I have told you of that, before. “He makes me to lie down in green pastures: He leads me beside the still waters.” God in Providence makes all things work together for good. Our heavenly Father bids the angels keep watch and ward about His children. God gives us the provender of His promise and supplies our souls so that no good thing is kept from us. Well may we sing, then, in the ways of the Lord.

We sing because we have such fine prospects on the road. Down in the Valley of Humiliation—why, no scenery is lovelier! Upon the hilltops of Amana, Tabor and Pisgah, when the Beloved is with us, what views of Himself and of His coming and of His Kingdom and of the Glory to be revealed open up before us! The way seems short with all these pleasant views before our mind’s eyes and we burst forth into singing in the ways of the Lord! But the best of it is that we have daylight to travel by, for we are not the children of darkness. We walk in the Light of God to the Kingdom of Light. Even when we say that it is dark with us, we do not mean that it is so dark as it is with the sinner when it is bright with him, for our darkest darkness is brighter than the sinner’s brightest brightness!

As I have often said, I would sooner be God’s dog than the devil’s darling. Better to lie like God’s Lazarus, full of sores, with no surgeons but the dogs, than go and sit up there clothed in scarlet with pampered Dives! Oh, yes, we are a joyful people and we travel by daylight to Heaven—the Light of God we have from Christ, and the Light of God we have within will melt into the eternal light! Come, Brothers and Sisters, let us sing of the ways of the Lord! When we have a mind for a tune, let us sing about God’s goodness to us in His ways—

*“The men of Grace have found  
Glory begun below!  
Celestial fruits on earthly ground  
From faith and hope may grow.  
Then let our songs abound!  
And every tear be dry;  
We’re marching through  
Emmanuel’s ground  
To fairer worlds on high.”*

III. The third observation is that THOSE WHO SING IN THE WAYS OF GOD ALSO SING OF THE LORD OF THE WAY. “They shall sing the ways of the Lord.” And then some read it, “That great is the glory of the Lord.” That is the subject of their song. When they sing about the Lord of the Way, this Psalm supplies us with the points of their song. Kindly open it and keep your eyes upon it. “I will praise You with my whole heart. Before the gods will I sing praise unto You.” What for? “I will worship toward Your holy temple and praise Your name.” What for, David? “For Your lovingkindness.” God is kind, but He is more than that. It is lovingkindness. A man breaks a leg and the surgeon sets the bone. That is kindness. But suppose the man’s mother could set the bone? Oh, how she would do it with lovingkindness! When the surgeon’s own son is under his hand and the surgeon is dealing with a broken bone, it is not only kindness, but lovingkindness—the sweetest of the sweet—the kindest of the kind!

Now, that is how God has dealt with us. Oh, how tenderly! “Your gentleness has made me great.” He has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence. Was there ever a God so good to anybody as God has been to us? I reckon myself to be the darling child of His Providence and I think I hear many of you say, “And so are we!” Some of you, perhaps, have had more whipping than others—not so much because you deserved it but because, “Whom the Lord loves He chastens.” Often the master is hardest with that boy in the school who is getting on best because chiding will make him grow. He will find no fault with a dull, stupid boy—he never can make much of him—but the very one who does the best is he whom he drives on the most vigorously, for he means to make a senior wrangler of him.

So, perhaps, you, dear Friends, are having more pruning than anybody else because you are a branch that will grow with pruning and will bring forth better grapes. There is more love in the chastening that you get than in the gentler way in which God deals with others. Come, let us bless His name! He is a loving God! Let us sing in His ways and chant the tune of His lovingkindness. And what next? “For Your lovingkindness and for Your truth.” Ah, that is a blessed thing—a faithful God, a true God, a God that cannot lie—a God that cannot fail His people, a God that never breaks His promise or forgets it. Oh, come, let us sing unto His name while we are in His ways! Let us tell the world that men of high degree are vanity and men of low degree are a lie, but our God is true!

Let us tell the world that riches make to themselves wings and fly away; that honor and fame are but so much wasted breath and empty air! But let us tell them that God is—and that in Him there is substantial good and faithfulness that never fails! Here is a sweet song for you to sing concerning the Lord of the Way while you are in the way! David goes on to say, “In the day when I cried, You answered me and strengthened me with strength in my soul.” Answered prayers make a fine set of hymns! Old prayers make new songs! When God hears prayers, we should let Him hear them again! When He has heard them as prayers, then let Him hear them as praises! We are often faulty here. I am afraid that we go to God with our errands when we are in need, for we have a cupboard love for Him. We are like many a dog to his master—he loves his master for the bones he gives him.

I do not say that we ever rise above that—we love the Lord because He has heard our prayers and our supplications, but let us sometimes go to the Lord wholly to praise Him. Say, “Lord, this time I will not ask anything of You except a grateful heart. And if You give me that, then I will praise You and praise You, and praise You because my soul is wholly taken up with adoring gratitude for what I have received.” Oh, dear Friends, file your prayers when God does not hear them, and when He does hear them, put them in another file! Keep a silver file for prayers that are unanswered, but a golden file for prayers that are answered so that you may render unto Him according to the benefit you have received! Psalms penned at the Mercy Seat when petitions are granted are sweet sonnets for the children of God.

The next subject for song is God’s condescension. Read the sixth verse and let your heart sing it—“Though the Lord is on high, yet has He respect unto the lowly.” Oh, do sing this! I remember when I was but a youth and began to preach the Gospel and won souls to Christ—they called me “the boy preacher”—oh how I used to bless the Lord that He would save souls by a boy! Obscure and unknown, but yet the Lord thought of me and used me! I cannot help praising Him on my own account because of that. Very likely some of you are in the same condition. You may be poor; you may have little talent; you may be quite unknown, but though the Lord is on high, yet has He respect unto the lowly! He hears the praises of the unknown! Wonderful is the power of “the great unknown.”

I am persuaded that the strength of the Church lies in its unknown members and possibly the soul of the music that goes up from earth to Heaven lies in the unknown singers unnamed among men, who, nevertheless, praise God day and night. Oh, bless Him that He thinks of you! O you maidens, whom He looks upon as He did on her of old who said, “My soul does magnify the Lord, for He has remembered the low estate of His handmaiden,” praise His name! And O, you matrons, remember Hannah, whose sweet song in the Old Testament was to the same effect as Mary’s in the New Testament! She, too, praised Him who looked upon the weak and the feeble, but caused the bows of the mighty ones to be broken. Condescending love is a charming theme.

Have you got through that list of songs, dear Friends? Then I have another subject for you. Just read on and begin to sing of God’s delivering mercy! “Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me.” Someone says, “Why, that is a song about something that is to be done.” That is so. We ought to have quite a collection of songs for the future—

*“And a new song is in my mouth,  
To long-loved music set!  
Glory to You for all the Grace  
I have not tasted yet.”*

Did you ever praises God for tomorrow’s dinner? “We have not had it yet.” No, but you will have it. Thank God for it tonight! Martin Tupper recommends young men, long before they are married, to pray for the wives that they will have, and there is good sense in his advice. Don’t you think that it is right for us to pray ahead a bit? Yes? Well, if it is right to pray ahead, let us praise God ahead for the mercies that we are to have!

When I lay very sick, I used to praise God at the thought of getting better. I could not help it. I was so glad when I thought of standing in the pulpit again! I am sure I praised God for this night’s sermon six months ago. Come, Brothers and Sisters, let us bless the Lord for the favors which the Lord has laid up for them that fear Him! When you do not seem to have anything to sing about, today, sing about what is going to be tomorrow! And if there seems to be nothing on earth to sing about, sing about the everlasting future! Soon you shall never be tempted to say, “What shall I eat, and what shall I drink, and with what shall I be clothed?” You shall have no cares to fret you, nor sins to repent of, for you shall be perfect before the Throne of God, clean escaped from all the dangers and the trials of the way! Come, let us sing for what will be! “Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me.”

In the last verse there is something to sing about which certain of our friends are afraid of—“The Lord will perfect that which concerns me.” Sing of final preservation! Some good people are not sure of that. They say, “Saints fall from Grace. God begins a good work in them, but He leaves them and they do not get to Heaven.” Brother, if you cannot reach the note of final salvation, put your fingers as high on the harp strings as they will go! But I am happy to say that mine can touch this lofty note, for if there is a doctrine that I am certain of, it is the doctrine of the Final Perseverance of the Saints! I will undertake to say that if the Bible does not teach that, it does not teach anything!

Words have ceased to have a meaning if the Bible does not teach the eternal life of true Believers! At least to my soul it is so. Hear these words—“I give unto My sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.” “He that drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but it shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.” Why, there are 50 reasons why he that has the Grace of God truly in him and is really born unto God shall not fall away! But one said to me some time ago, “Yonder man has fallen from Grace and has been regenerated three times.” “Oh,” I said to him, “You need a new word then—re-re-regenerated.”

I have heard of the new birth, but I never heard of a newer birth! I have heard of being born again, but I never heard of being born again and again and again! I discover no trace of it in the Word of God, but I do see distinct tokens that it is impossible. It is written—“If these shall fall away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance, seeing that they have crucified the Son of God afresh and put Him to an open shame.” There is a life which God puts into the soul and that life is eternal! If it could die—if that were possible—the man would be hopelessly dead. “If the salt has lost its savor, with what shall it be salted? It is from now on good for nothing, but to be trodden under foot of men.” “We believe better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.” “Faithful is He that has called you, who also will do it.” “He will perfect that which concerns me” and, therefore, I will sing this song to my stringed instruments as long as I live—

*“My soul from the palms of His hands  
Eternity cannot erase.  
Impressed on His heart it remains  
In marks of indelible Grace.  
Yes, I to the end shall endure,  
As sure as the earnest is given!  
More happy, but not more secure,  
Than glorified spirits in Heaven.”*

Now there is something to sing about!  
IV. And now I close with the fourth observation, which is this—THEY SHALL SING TO THE LORD OF THE WAY, AS WELL AS OF THE LORD OF THE WAY. “They shall sing in the ways, for great is the glory of the Lord.” Oh, Brothers and Sisters, let us take care that all our songs are to the honor and praise of God, for if we ever sing to our own praise it will be idolatry! I fear much public worship is thus marred. We heard of a man in Boston, in America, praying such a grand prayer that the newspapers said, the next day, that it was, “the finest prayer that had ever been offered to a Boston audience.” I am afraid that a good deal of praying is of that sort and I am sure much singing is no better. Why, we hear of churches where four people are hired to do the praise of God and all the people sit still and listen to them! And that is according to the New Testament, is it? It must be a very “revised version,” surely!

I find nothing of that sort in the Book I have been accustomed to use. Let all the people of God praise Him! Singing should be congregational, but it should never be performed for the credit of the congregation. “Such very remarkable singing! The place is quite renowned for its musical performances.” This is a poor achievement! Our singing should be such that God hears it with pleasure—singing in which there is not so much art as heart—not so much of musical sound as of spiritual emotion. They shall sing to the glory of God!

And mark this, dear Brothers and Sisters, if you and I sing with the Spirit and the understanding, we shall increase the manifested Glory of God by bringing others to sing in His ways. Sinners pass by God’s ways, sometimes, and as they go by, though they cannot see, for they are blind, they can hear something, and they say to one another, “Who are those people that tramp along the road?” They are pilgrims to Heaven. And the sinners say, “Let us stop and listen a bit.” They listen and they hear the pilgrims groaning along, and moaning along, and one says to another, “Let us go the other way. Let us escape from such miserable company.”

But another time a number stand listening by the side of the hedge and they ask, “Are these pilgrims going along? Why, they are singing! Are they Methodists? Are they Presbyterians? Are they that strait-laced kind of people?” “Yes.” Well, but they are singing and they sing very heartily, too! They seem to be uncommonly merry. Is that their general way? “Oh, yes,” says one, “and they have good reason to be happy. I was with one of them and he was telling me what the Lord had done for him—and I thought that if the Lord had done as much for me I should be happy, too.” “And do you know any of these people? Are they troubled as we are?” “Oh, yes, they have their troubles, but they take their cares to their heavenly Father and find rest.” “Then,” says one, “I would like to go to their meetings and learn their secret”—and so they come and find the Savior!

Legions of flies are caught by this honey! Many are brought to God by the sweet lives of His people. If we can always rejoice in the Lord, we shall bring many to God who otherwise would have turned on their heels and said, “We will have nothing to do with these dull dreamers. We are too young to lose all our joy in life.” Tell the young people that the most joyous life is the life that is nearest to God—that the most merry life is the life of the man who has found all for this world, and all for the world to come, in God and in His Christ! God help you, dear Brothers and Sisters, to sing all day long and may you even have “songs in the night,” to the glory of Him whose name is—“the happy God.” Amen.

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1506 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

CHOICE COMFORT FOR A YOUNG BELIEVER  
NO. 1506

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON. “The Lord will perfect that which concerns me: Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever: forsake not the works of Your own hands.” Psalm 138:8.

CONTINUALLY I am clearing the ground and laying the foundation of eternal salvation in the Grace of God which was manifested in Christ Jesus when He came into the world to save sinners. This I did this morning and the Lord has set His seal thereon right speedily, which is to me a sure proof that the frequent preaching of the foundation Truths of God is according to the mind of God. That necessary work cannot be done too often, for men need to hear the true Gospel as often as they hear the striking of the hour and even then, they forget it. Yet do not all forget. There are a few, like those who were saved with Noah, who seek the Ark of salvation and live.

To those who have newly come to put their trust in Jesus I wish to speak this evening and I do so with much delight, for as the sight of the new-born babe makes glad the mother, so does the news of a new-born soul fill me with exceeding joy! Good tidings have come to my ears! We do not often sow and reap quite so quickly as I have done on this occasion, for since this morning’s service I have hopeful evidence that God has blessed the Word to many souls and my beloved fellow helpers, who watch around this congregation like scouts around an army, report that the slain of the Lord have been many.

Now, between half-past twelve o’clock this morning and this time in the evening such souls have gone a day’s journey towards Heaven and already they have begun, I dare say, to question themselves and possibly to be exercised with some few fears. Thus early they may have met with lions in the way, or have found worse than real lions in their own fears. They have only lately known the Lord, but already they are growing anxious and looking into the future with a somewhat troubled gaze. Therefore we come forth lovingly as a shepherd hastens to cherish the newborn lambs. We come to the little ones with words of good cheer, for they need them and we have special orders from our Master to see that they are tenderly comforted.

We trust to also speak to those who have known the Lord for many years, some words of help with regard to matters which may now be causing them alarm. The consolations of the Lord are very reviving and they abound in number, therefore let small and great partake of them. “Comfort you, comfort you My people, says your God.” When a man becomes a Christian and the Grace of God commences its work in his soul, he learns to be serious and thoughtful. That is one of the first noticeable changes

in him. He renounces his former carelessness and indifference and becomes a sober, considerate man in whose mind there is a deep concern as to his own character in the sight of God. He is concerned about the temptations he meets with in his walk among the sons of men lest these temptations should be too much for him and he should be betrayed into sin.

He longs to lead a holy life. In fact, holiness is his great concern. He prays that he may leave such a life behind him for others to remember as shall be worth their following as an example. He asks himself, “Will the hope I have just obtained really endure to the last days of my life? Will it sustain me amidst the pangs and weaknesses of death? Is it truly such that when I go before the burning Throne of God, Himself, I need not tremble?” Such matters were sport to him once—they are serious questions now. He has thrown down the cap and bells of the jester and taken up the staff of a pilgrim and the sword of a warrior, confessing in an unmistakable manner that “life is real, life is earnest.”

He is a man of concern now, concerned about his soul’s affairs, his sins, his life, his death, his eternal salvation. A solemn air is about him—he hears the wheels of eternity sounding in his ears, he girds his loins for his lifework and he puts away childish things. This is all well, but as every state has its dangers, so the peril of religious concern is despondency. Thoughtfulness soon degenerates into distrust and holy anxiety easily rusts into unbelief. The more a man looks within him, the less he can trust himself, and the more a man looks around him, the more he feels that he is in danger and so he is apt very early in his Christian course to be downcast and much afraid and to say within himself, “I shall surely one day fall by the hands of the enemy. My confidence will prove to be a delusion and my conversion a fiction.” He is fearful as to the result of future temptations like a fresh recruit in the battle who feels certain that every boom of the cannon proclaims his death.

Now I want, if God will help me, to meet such fears tonight. May the Divine Spirit enable us to have a strong and mighty faith in God, not only with regard to past transgression, which is clean gone through the atoning blood, but with regard to all the difficulties and dangers of the present and future. And may we drink into the spirit of the text which is now before us—“The Lord will perfect that which concerns me: Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever: forsake not the works of Your own hands.”

Here, first, we see that God fills us with assurance—“The Lord will perfect that which concerns me.” Secondly, He gives us rest in His mercy— “Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever.” And thirdly, He puts prayer into our hearts and supplies us with a plea—“Forsake not the works of Your own hands.” May God, the Holy Spirit most graciously help us in this meditation.

I. At the beginning of our text, to meet our fears about the future, THE LORD FILLS US WITH ASSURANCE. “The Lord will perfect that which concerns me.” You see the assurance is, first, that God is realty at work on our behalf. Get a grip of this, you troubled ones, and by a personal faith say, “The Lord will perfect that which concerns me.” You have come to Jesus and trusted your soul in His hands—we take it for granted that you have done so—then it is certain that the Lord has brought you to this state of mind, for never did a man in this world simply come and trust in Christ unless the Spirit of God had led him to it. What says the Savior? “No man comes unto Me except the Father which has sent Me draw him.”

You would never have come to a simple reliance upon the mediatorial work and Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus if there had not been a work of Grace in your soul! Every effect has a cause and all spiritual faith is created in the heart by the Holy Spirit. Since the Lord has begun to save you, your confidence with regard to the future must be that He who began this good work will continue to operate in your soul. If the work of God upon your heart were discontinued—your life, your hope, your faith, your love would be discontinued, too—for you only live because the Holy Spirit lives and works in you! The same power which first made the world and built yonder arch of azure must sustain it still, or the world would feel its final crash and the blue dome would utterly dissolve.

Continued outgoings of power from the Creator are essential to the continued existence of creation! There is neither power, nor life, nor being apart from God. This is true in the kingdom of Grace as much as in that of Nature—we are gracious because God gives us Grace and we keep His ways because the Lord keeps us by His power unto salvation. The new life within us has been created by the Lord and by Him it must be sustained. Let no one of my hearers forget this. You are to put your reliance upon the working of the eternal power and Godhead within your soul, for there is the fountain of Grace and from there the streams must flow.

Now mind you, if you base your reliance upon your own perseverance, your own prayerfulness, your own spirituality, your own strength of resolution, or your own settledness of purpose, you will learn that “cursed is he that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm.” Of all the men in the world who are unfit to be trusted, the most unfit one is yourself! It were almost better to trust your fellow man than to trust in yourself. “Trust in the Lord forever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.” I think you will see that the first clause of the text means just this—“The Lord will perfect that which concerns me,” not, “I will perfect it myself,” but, “The Lord will do it.” There is a consciousness that God is at work and the full assurance that He will still be at work in order to complete that which He has commenced.

Have you obtained a religion which is not the work of God? Then I would exhort you to get rid of it! If your religion shines and glitters and seems to you to be inexpressibly lovely, yet if it has budded out of your own nature, or is the result of your own free will and is not traceable to the operation of Divine Grace and to Divine Grace alone, do as the man did with the bad banknote—throw it down on the highway, or into a ditch and run sway from it. Let no one know that the homemade counterfeit belongs to you! For it is worthless now and it will prove deceptive at the last. But if the religion you have received is the work of God, then be certain that He who began the work will perfect it. Be well assured that He who works in you to will and to do of His own good pleasure will always find a pleasure in thus working and will never forsake the work of His own

hands.

The Psalmist, however, did not merely believe that God was at work and would be at work, but he affirms that He will complete the work. “The Lord will perfect that which concerns me.” Has He begun it? Then, my Soul, rest sure of this, that He will finish it! Have you ever seen an unfinished work of God? If you had been present on the second or the third day of the week of Creation you might have seen a work unfinished. Before the morning stars sang together over a perfect creation, many things were made, but the complete chain of being was not as yet visible. But did the Almighty pause in the middle of the week and leave His design unfinished?

How would the record of creation run? That God had made the light but had not made the sun? That He had made the waters, but had not divided them from the land, or said to the sea, “Up to here shall you go, but no farther”? No, the first day of Creation was a guarantee of the five which followed it and of the grand day of rest which crowned the week! You might have been certain from that very first day when He said, “Let there be light,” that He meant to make eyes to see the light. And when there were living creatures for each domain of Nature, beasts of the field, fowl of the air and fish of the sea, you might be morally certain that He meant to crown the kingdom of Nature by bringing forth into it a being to whom He should say, “I have made you to have dominion over the fowl of the air and the fish of the sea and whatever passes through the paths of the sea.”

God’s beginnings ensure His endings. He makes no mistake in the plan and feels no weariness in the execution and, therefore, when He puts forth His hand He never draws it back till His work is done. It is always so. Devils of Hell and men under their influence, no doubt think to stop the path of God in Divine Providence, but He who can lift the telescope of prophecy and can see the end of the present age, may also hear the ultimate millennial song of, “Hallelujah, hallelujah, for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns” going up from every hill and dale of this emancipated earth! No machinations of Hell or craft of the Prince of Darkness can ever prevent the Lord from bringing about the consummation of His promise for which His Church is daily praying.

Here then, youthful Believer, is your confidence—you have begun to be a Christian! God’s Grace has just changed your heart. You are anxiously asking, “How shall I persevere to the end? How shall I arrive at perfection?” You shall be kept and perfected by the Lord in whom you trust! The same power which commenced a good work in you can complete it and will complete it! Do you doubt it? Think of what is done at the beginning of spiritual life and let this confirm you as to its end. The Holy Spirit raises men from the dead—can He not keep them alive after He has made them alive? He brings His people out of Egypt in the day that they believe—do you think that He who brings them out cannot preserve them in the wilderness till He lands them in Canaan?

He has already given us Christ to be the Bread of Heaven, will He not furnish us with that Bread till we shall enter into the purchased possession? Let us rest in confidence! Our Alpha will be our Omega and He will secure every letter which lies between, for it is not His way to lay a foundation without building thereon even to the top stone! Now, I want you to have this blessed confidence that God is at work and will finish what He has begun and I would have you carry this confidence into everything. You may take it into Providence—the Lord will perfect that which concerns you there. Dear Friend, you have a plan on hand. You say, “I wish I could be sure that I shall carry it through. Can you tell me?” No, I cannot. I can tell you this, however, that if it really ought to be your purpose, if it is God’s plan for you for life, you will carry it through.

I have known men, actuated by their own folly, obstinately choose a pursuit for which they were not fit. And in such cases one of the best things that the Lord can do for them is to make them suffer shipwreck and lose their all. It would have been a bad case for our friend Jonah if he had really gone down to Tarshish, for I do not know what he would have done there—he could not have turned sailor, for no crew would have endured so sour a comrade! It was a great mercy for him when he was thrown into the sea and was forced to travel towards Nineveh in the fish’s belly. And so, sometimes we enter upon a giant scheme of our own inventing, but it is not the Lord’s scheme and so it comes to nothing. Like Jehosaphat, we make ships of Tarshish go to Ophir for gold, but they go not for they are broken at Eziongaber as Jehosaphat’s navy was. And we complain, perhaps, but it is better to submit, for it comes forth from the Lord of Hosts who is amazing in counsel and excellent in working.

He often perfects that which truly concerns us by taking us away from that which never ought to concern us. It may be, dear Hearer, that the Lord is dealing thus with you. You have been setting up in business in the direction of your own choice and not of His. So He ends that matter by a heavy loss and you may be very thankful that He does. But that course of life which you have submitted to His wisdom, which you have taken up in obedience to the plain indications of His Providence which you follow out with integrity, walking before the Lord with all singleness of purpose and committing your way unto Him—that course of life, I say, shall have His blessing and none shall be able to put you on one side. He will perfect, in your case, that which concerns you.

The Lord told David that he should be a king. It did not look very likely when he was a lowly shepherd, but since such was the purpose of the Eternal, there was no keeping the son of Jesse off the throne! He is called to court and there Saul’s javelin almost makes an end of him! He goes to battle and takes a giant’s head and that brings the king’s envy upon him. He is hunted like a partridge on the mountains by those who thirsted for his life, but he must be king—no Saul or Deog could hinder the Divine decree—David must be king! Though he will not lift a hand to smite Saul, yet must his persecutor vacate the royal seat for him. Judah shall acknowledge him, but half a crown shall not be enough. Speedily shall Israel submit to him. The Lord must perfect that which concerns him and make him king over the whole nation and establish the throne to his seed after him.  
Now, my Brother, if the Lord has called you to the work of the ministry, the devil cannot shut the mouth that God opens! If He has called you to any post of honor or difficulty in His Church, or for His cause, you will arrive at it and your hands shall be sufficient for you. Whatever may stand in the way, the Lord will carry you through and perfect that which concerns you. Rest you sure of that! “If I thought so,” says one, “I should be much more quiet than I am.” Think so, my Brother, and be quiet! “Oh, but I should feel more confidence.” Have confidence, Brother! Perhaps that very confidence will be the means to the end and help you to succeed. “Such assurance would make me more patient and I should not put out my hand so hastily if I knew that what I am hoping for would come in due time.”

Do not put out your hand hastily, Brother. Keep back just as David did when there was Saul lying before him sound asleep and his spear was ready for fatal use. Then his friend said to him, “Let me smite him but this once.” It could have been done in an instant and the crown would have been gained by a single stroke! But David did not take the business into his own hands—he would leave matters with God. Though a sin may seem to be the straight line which leads to an end, yet be sure of this, that it is always the longest way! The nearest way to be a gainer forever is to be a loser for the present for conscience sake, while the road to failure and to shame is found in the tempting path of hastening to be rich. Be sure that it is no business of yours to perfect that which concerns you in Providence. God has promised to do it and only presumption will dare to interfere. “Stand still and see the salvation of God” is often the wisest policy as well as the truest heroism. Take care that you put not forth an unbelieving hand to snatch the unripe fruit from the tree. Wait, and in patience possess your soul.

But this, dear Friends, is more especially true in the work of Grace in the heart. In that case the Lord will perfect that which concerns you. You have only a little faith. It looks like a spark and scarcely can be called a flame, but it will increase until it burns aloft like a beacon fire. The Lord will give you an Abrahamic faith if you will wait upon Him for it and exercise what faith you already possess. Trust Him, trust Him with your faith! Trust Him with your trust! You have a little love and you sigh to be altogether taken up with affection for your Lord—such affection shall be worked in you before long—even that “perfect love, which casts out fear.” Trust God with your love and the God of Love will reveal Himself in you till your whole soul is saturated with gratitude!

You have some little of the likeness of Christ already. Walk before the Lord in all confidence and He will sketch the image of Christ upon your character to perfection and you shall become so manifestly Christly that men shall know you to be Christ’s disciple by your very speech! You are a long way from being perfect, you say. Ah, but you shall be perfect—the Lord will perfect that which concerns you. Will you know yourself, Brother, when you are made perfect? I do not expect to see you coming up these aisles when you have reached that point, for another and better assembly will claim you and gain you! If at some future period of your sojourn here I should hear you say, “I am perfect,” I shall know better at once, for you will prove your pride by your silly bragging! Yet you will, one day, be completely holy and spotlessly pure.

You and I and all those who trust in Christ shall be perfect—every sin cast out, every virtue brought to harmonious completeness. We shall be holy as our Father in Heaven. “Oh,” says one, “that is the best news I ever heard! Shall I be perfect?” Yes, as surely as you are in the perfect Christ, so surely shall you be perfect with Him. We shall be holy, unblameable and unreprovable in His sight in the day of His appearing. Even while we are here, we are struggling after perfection—this is the goal to which we run—this is the target at which we aim. That we may perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord and be sanctified spirit, soul and body is the high ambition of our lives! Let us never despair of it, for there stands the promise—“The Lord will perfect that which concerns me.”

Now, if this is true in Providence and true of the work of Grace in us, it is also true of the work of Grace all around us. How often do I go before the Lord with the weight of this Church and all its institutions upon me! I cry from my heart, “What will come of them all?” Then it is my confidence and delight that the Lord will perfect that which concerns me! Up to now He has helped me in a marvelous manner and why should I fancy that He will forsake me, seeing that with all my heart I desire to honor Him? Only have trust in God, you who live for the Glory of Christ and, as your day your strength shall be. You shall go forth conquering and to conquer if your sword is drawn only in Christ’s quarrel!

If your charge is but a few children in the Sunday school, or if it is the raising of a cause for Christ in a hamlet or a village, only give your whole soul to it and rest in God and you shall find Him perfecting that which concerns you! Why, we have not half the confidence in God about our religious efforts that we ought to have! We go to work with a faint heart and tremblingly hope that perhaps we shall succeed. Look how amazed we are when we find a soul converted here and there—and what a noise we make over a solitary convert—like a hen that has laid a single egg and must tell all the world about it! If we had more confidence in God, we would expect converts by the hundreds and we would have them!

We should go to work with the great weapon of the Gospel which God has put into our hands and, with the power which God has promised, we would see the kingdom given unto Messiah and the pleasure of the Lord would prosper in His hands! May we have faith enough to be certain that our unchanging God will perfect that which concerns us. So I leave that first part, trusting that our hearts may be filled with quiet assurance by the Holy Spirit.

II. And now, secondly and very briefly, THE LORD GIVES US REST IN HIS MERCY, for what says the text, “Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever.” See, my Brothers and Sisters, how this works in us rest from fear? “Alas!” sighs one troubled heart, “I fear I shall fall into many sins between here and Heaven.” Well may you have that dread, my Brother. But you may readily overcome the fear by singing in your heart, “Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever.” The blood of Atonement will never fail and, therefore, mercy will always endure. “If any man sin, we have an Advocate with

the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous.”—  
*“Dear dying Lamb, Your precious blood*

***Shall never lose its power,  
Till all the ransomed Church of God  
Is saved to sin no more.”***

Your sins between here and Heaven shall be forgiven you, so let the dread of condemnation be banished!

Then comes up another fear—“But I do not see how I am to be perfected. My nature is so vile. I find such resistance to the Divine operations. The flesh struggles against the Spirit and I cannot get my rebellious flesh to be subject to the Law of God.” The answer to this distressing lament is the same as in the former case—“His mercy endures forever.” He will bear with you and forbear beyond all bounds. None but a God could have patience with you, but the Lord is God and not man! Some of God’s children were the most crooked people that ever were in this world and it must be sovereignty which chose them, for they are by no means naturally desirable or attractive.

It was hard work, even, for a Moses to have patience with them of old. Though he was the meekest of men, yet his anger waxed hot against them and he said, “Hear now, you rebels!” But their God had no such angry words for them—  
He was still patient and bore with them for 40 years. Brother, Sister, He will have patience with you because His mercy endures forever. He has been teaching you faith, but how slowly you have learned! There is a man who has been learning faith these 25 years and he still is an unbeliever at times. Doubts frequently mar the face of his assurance, but the Lord still bears with his unbelief and goes on to teach him, little by little, line upon line, precept upon precept.

There is one here who has been taught love. Yes, for the past 40 years that Brother has been learning love to the Lord and love to the Brethren, spelling out the lessons of love, letter by letter. He is in the infant class even now, but the Lord is having a deal of patience with him and He will yet make him tender, considerate and affectionate. Let us hope it will be soon, for his own sake, and still more for the sake of his Brethren to whom he acts so roughly. Many of God’s people are very slow learners— they have been at school these 20 years and cannot yet read their own titles to eternal mansions, though penned in capitals by their Redeemer’s own hand!

As for myself, I am more brutish than any man and other teachers would long ago have lost patience with me, but “the Lord will perfect that which concerns me, for His mercy endures forever.” Between now and Heaven, dear Brothers and Sisters, some of you will, perhaps, have to pass through a great deal of affliction and some of us who are called daily to see others suffer, feel much tenderness towards those who are the children of affliction and, therefore, we speak with great sympathy when we say, “Do not shudder with regard to those pains and tremors which may come over your poor trembling frame, for His mercy endures forever. He will make your bed in your sickness and underneath you shall be the everlasting arms.”

Between here and Heaven, perhaps you will experience a great many needs. It may be you have been afraid of poverty. You have not a very large sum of money in the bank and you have not a very large sum in your pocket, either, and sometimes you are out of work. Many times you hardly know what you shall eat or what you shall drink—be this your comfort—“His mercy endures forever.” “Having food and raiment let us be content, for He has said, I will never leave you nor forsake you.” All the streams may dry, but the brook Cherith will flow on and even if that chosen rivulet should fail, behold, God has a widow woman at Zarephath who will feed you! Though she has nothing herself but a handful of meal and a little oil in the cruse, yet you shall both live upon it till the famine is over.

The heir of Heaven shall not lack for the bread of earth while God lives, for it is written, “Trust in the Lord and do good; so shall you dwell in the land and verily you shall be fed.” “He gives food unto all flesh, for His mercy endures forever.” “Your bread shall be given you.” At last, unless the Lord should suddenly appear, there will come the hour of death which, by many, is exceedingly dreaded. You will gather up your feet in the bed and bid adieu to all temporal things. And then the enduring mercy of God shall be your abounding consolation! A large part of our fears about death are idle. One man of God always feared death, but he might have spared himself his wretchedness, for he fell asleep one night in apparently excellent health and died in his sleep! He never could have known anything about dying, for on his face were no tokens of pain or struggle, nor was there any reason to believe that he ever awoke till he lifted up his eyes amid the cherubim!

Beloved, if we die awake and even if we die in pain, we shall yet hope to die triumphantly! If we do not die shouting victory, we hope that we shall peacefully fall asleep—the Lord, Himself, kissing away our soul into the eternity of joy—“for His mercy endures forever.” “He will perfect that which concerns me.” Now, I want you young friends, especially, who are just beginning life, each one to feel, “Now, I am going to put myself and all my temporal circumstances, all my fears, all my engagements, my living, my dying, everything into the hands of God and there I am going to leave it. I will trust Him with my all. In the beginning I will trust Him and I will do so even to the end and go my way with this calm confidence, ‘He will perfect that which concerns me, for His mercy endures forever.’”

I remember hearing one of our evangelists once say that some Christian people, when they first profess to be Christians, are like a man who is going a long distance by rail, but only takes a ticket for a short distance and then he has to get out and make a rush for new tickets as he goes along. “Now,” said he, “there are other Believers who know better and take a ticket all the way through at the first, which is by far the wiser way.” Some trust the Lord to keep them for a quarter of a year and others for a month. But when I believed in Christ Jesus, I thank His name, I trusted Him to save me to the end! I sought for and obtained a finished salvation which is my joy and hope at this moment! I took a ticket all the way through and I have not had to get a fresh ticket yet. I have sometimes

thought I should, but when I have run to the office, they have handed me back my old ticket, the one I lost, the same one as before—and I knew it to be the same, for it bore this stamp upon it—“He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.”

The Believer is saved at first by believing and he shall be so to the last. Do not trust a rickety salvation which may break down with you—a temporary, trumpery salvation which may only last you for a time and then fail to embrace with all your heart that Divine promise—“I will never leave you nor forsake you.” Cry out after the Living Water which shall be in you as a well of water springing up unto everlasting life and suck the marrow out of this text, “He that believes in Me has”—has then and there, down on the nail—“has”—now, today, “has everlasting life”—not life for a time, but life everlasting as surely as he believes in Christ!

III. This brings me to conclude with the third clause of our text which is a prayer. The Lord, having given His people Grace to rest in His mercy, PUTS IT INTO THEIR HEARTS TO PRAY AND SUPPLIES THEM WITH A PLEA—“Forsake not the works of Your own hands.” To my mind, it is a very touching prayer. “Lord, You have begun the work upon me; go on to finish it, for if You do not, it will never be finished. If You leave it, it is left undone and I am undone, indeed. But do not forsake the work of Your own hands.” It is such a prayer as the clay might put up when it is revolving on the potter’s wheel. The potter is using his best skill and producing an article of great beauty, bringing out its shape and form as it spins round before him.

Already you can see something of what it will be—the design does not yet perfectly appear, but you can guess it. But suppose the potter were to stop the wheel, take up the clay and fling it back, again, into the lump? That vessel would never be finished, for it cannot finish itself. It has no power to shape itself in any degree and so if it were rational clay and could speak, it would say, “Forsake not the work of your own hands. Persevere in what you have begun.” This is a prayer which you and I may well bring before God, whose workmanship we are! “O God, if I have only a little faith, yet You gave it to me. Oh, give me more! If You have given me only a desire after You, yet that desire is a Divine creation! Have respect unto it, I pray You, and fulfill it.”

This is a powerful argument with our gracious God, for, Brothers and Sisters, He does not give you a little Grace to tantalize you. Now He has given you a hunger and thirst after Him—suppose He does not satisfy you? That hunger and that thirst will be cruel gifts! He has taken away from you the power to be happy in the world, has He not? Well, if He does not intend to give you His own Divine happiness, why has He made you weary of the world and the pleasures of sin? A dog likes bones and I am sure I would not teach him to leave his bones or turn him into a man if, afterwards, I had to say, “Now you have become a man, there is nothing for you. If you want a meal you must try the bones again.” No, no! He who makes us hate the world means to give us something better! He who makes us loathe sin means to cleanse us from it! He who begins to build in our souls is not a foolish Builder of whom it shall be said, “This man began to build, but was not able to finish.”

Do you think, Brothers and Sisters, that the Lord has found out something in you which is so bad that it baffles Him and compels Him to give up His work? If it were so, why did He ever begin it? He knew what would be in you. The prescient eye of God foresaw every sin and every tendency to sin in the heart of every man that lives—and so when He began His work He knew all that it would require to perfect it. He has not gone forth to fight the devil in you to discover that He is not strong enough to meet him! Oh, no, He knows the force of your evil nature, the force of your hasty temper, the force of that obstinate self-love, the force of that imperious pride, the force of that dogged will—He knows all this, nor can anything take Him by surprise and, therefore, since He has begun to save you, rest assured that He will accomplish His design!

His hand is not shortened, nor His heart dismayed. You may cry to Him out of the utmost depths and be quite assured that He can and will, even there, carry on His purposes of love, for He will not forsake the work of His own hands. Go to Him, then, in prayer! Plead with Him mightily! Prayer is the channel appointed to convey to you the blessing. Open the valves and let the stream flow into your heart. Whenever you feel as if you must be broken in pieces like a poor earthen pot, then cry to Him—“Lord, forsake not the work of Your own hands. Oh, do not leave me, for I bear the print of Your hands! Be patient with this ill-worked clay and work upon me till You shall have made me a vessel unto honor fit for Your own special use.”

The closing word is just this. I have often preached to you salvation to sinners, as sinners, just as you are and I have bid you, in my Master’s name, come and receive that free mercy which He presents to the guilty, even to the guiltiest of all, when they will but take it and trust in His dear name. Now, I supplement that by advising you to carry the rule of faith into every part of your life. Trust the Lord Jesus for everything! Do not come, tonight, to trust in Christ half way, but for all things commit yourself into His eternal keeping, for He is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before His Presence with exceedingly great joy. If you Believers have been trusting the Divine Lord to keep you—but if you are keeping yourselves—get beyond that and trust in Him to keep you that you may keep yourselves! If you have said, “I believe that He will be faithful to me if I am faithful to Him,” go much farther, for it will never do to stop there.

Trust in Him to make you faithful to Him! Do not suffer the pivot to rest in you—put the whole stress and burden upon the Lord Jesus. If you retain any, “if,” or, “but,” about your eternal salvation, it will be a thorn in your pillow and a serpent at your heel. If you are the cornerstone and mainstay of your own salvation, you are lost! You must hang upon the sure nail, Christ Jesus, all the burden and all the glory of His Father’s house. As for depending on your own watchfulness, or constancy, or anything else of your own, I want you to get right away from it and now, once and for all, by an act which you shall rejoice in as long as you live, commit your whole future—time and eternity—into the pierced hands of Him

who says that He gives to His sheep eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of His hands!

In this one thing I would have you be as I am, for I have no shade of hope apart from the Lord Jesus, either as to my pardon or my perseverance, my new birth or my ultimate perfection. I want to know what is to become of me in death and what is to become of me when I live, again, in eternity. And if I could not have a far-reaching faith which flung itself across the awful gulf that separates this world from the next, my religion would yield me but small comfort. But to-night—and may everybody here be enabled to do so—I do put my whole self, my soul, my body, my engagements, my prospective sufferings, my future troubles, my labors— everything which has to do with me or about me into those same hands which bought me when they was nailed to the tree!

He shall keep me, or I shall never be kept! Once and for all I make a deposit of my eternal interests and leave them with Him whose honor it is to keep safely that which is committed to Him. He is able to preserve me and I have done with it. I hand over my all to Him. Come, my Brothers and Sisters, do the same and when you have done so be of good cheer! A man takes his money into his bank and leaves it. He does not go back in a quarter of an hour and say, “Mr. Cashier, have you my money safely?” “Yes, Sir.” “Well I want to see it.” They would not want such a man to deal with their bank long, for he has no confidence and will be more trouble than profit.

Put in your all with Jesus and leave it there! Make a permanent investment. Draw the interest of it and spend it in present enjoyment, but leave your all as a permanent investment and sing with me—

*“I know that safe with Him remains,  
Protected by His power,*

***What I’ve committed to His hands  
Till the decisive hour.  
Then will He own my worthless name  
Before His Father’s face,  
And in the New Jerusalem  
Appoint my soul a place.”***

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Sermon #231 The New Park Street Pulpit 1

FAITH IN PERFECTION  
NO. 231

**DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, JANUARY 2, 1859, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE MUSIC HALL, ROYAL SURREY GARDENS.

**“The Lord will perfect that which concerns me. Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever: forsake not the works of Your own hands.” Psalm 138:8.**

I HAVE selected this text, or, rather, it has been given to me to furnish a motto for the whole year to all the believing family of God now present. It was brought under my notice from a very dear friend, a venerable minister of the Church of England and an earnest lover of the Truth of God as it is in Jesus. He always sends me, at the beginning of the year, or a day or two previously, a little envelope sealed up, that I am not to open till New Year’s day, containing a printed text of Scripture, which he desires to be preserved during the remainder of the year, to act as a staff whereon we may rest through the pilgrimage of the next twelve months.

When I opened my envelope I found this text and it charmed me. It contains in itself the very essence of the Grace of God. It reads like music to the soul and is like a bottle of water in the desert to the thirsty lip. Let me read it again and remember it and dwell upon it and digest it during all the year. “The Lord will perfect that which concerns me. Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever—forsake not the works of Your own hands.” In the opening, I must remark that this is not the heritage of all mankind. The word, “me,” in the text, cannot be appropriated by any man, unless he, in some respects, resembles the character of David, who penned this Psalm. The text, however, itself, is its own guard. If you look at it, you will see that there is in its heart a full description of a true Christian. I will ask you three questions suggested by the words themselves and according to your answer to these three questions, shall be my reply, yes or no, as to whether this promise belongs to you.

To begin, let us read the first sentence—“The Lord will perfect that which concerns me.” Now, have you a concern in and a concern about heavenly things? Have you ever felt that eternity concerns you more than time? That the mansions of Heaven are more worthy of your consideration than the dwelling places of earth? Have you felt that you ought to have a greater concern about your immortal soul than about your perishing body? Remember, if you are living the life of the butterfly, the life of the present, a sportive and flowery life, without making any preparation or taking any thought for a future world, this promise is not yours. If the things of God do not concern you, then God will not perfect them for you. You must have in your own soul a concern about these things and afterwards you must have a belief in your heart that you have an interest in heavenly things, or otherwise it would be a perversion of Holy Scripture

for you to appropriate these things to yourselves.

Can we then, each of us, put our hand upon our heart and say, without stammering, which suggests a hypocrite—can we say honestly, as in the sight of God—“I am concerned about the things of God, of Christ, of salvation, of eternity! I may not have assurance, but I have concern if I cannot say I know in whom I have believed, yet I can say I know in whom I desire to believe. If I cannot say I know that my Redeemer lives, yet I can say I desire that I may be found in him at last, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.” Well soul, if you have a concern about the things of God, this is your promise and let not Master Clip-Promise take it away from you. Suffer him not to take any part of its preciousness. It is all yours, “The Lord will perfect that which concerns you.”

Another question is suggested by the second clause, “Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever.” Have we then tasted of God’s mercy? Have you and I gone to the Throne of Grace conscious of our lost estate? Have we made confession of our sins? Have we looked to the blood of Jesus? And do we know that the mercy of God has been manifested to us? Have we breathed the dying thief’s petition and have we had the gracious answer of Jesus? Have we prayed as the publican did? And have we gone to our house justified by God’s mercy? Remember, O Man, if you have never received God’s pardoning mercy and His forgiving grace, this text is a Divine enclosure into which you have no right to intrude. This is a banquet of which you have no right to eat. This is a secret place, into which you have no right to enter. We must first taste God’s mercy and, having tasted that, we may believe that He will perfect that which concerns us.

A third question, and I beseech you put these questions to your heart lest you should be misled—by any comfortable words that I shall hereafter speak—into the foul delusion that this promise signifies yourself, when it does not. The last question is suggested by the prayer, “Forsake not the works of Your own hands.” Have you then a religion which is the work of God’s hands? Many men have a religion which is their

 own work, there is nothing supernatural about it—human nature began it, human nature has carried it on and as far as they have any hope they trust that human nature will complete it. Remember there is no spring on earth that has force enough in it to spout a fountain into Paradise and there is no strength in human nature that shall ever suffice to raise a soul to Heaven.

You may practice morality and I beseech you do so. You may attend to ceremonies and you have a right to do so and must do so. You may endeavor to do all righteousness, but since you are a sinner condemned in the sight of God, you can never be pardoned apart from the blood of Christ. And you can never be purified apart from the purifying operations of the Holy Spirit. Man’s religion which is born on earth and born of the will of the flesh or of blood, is a vain religion. Oh, Beloved, except a man be born again, or from above, as the original has it, he cannot see the kingdom of God! That which is born of the flesh is flesh and cannot enter Heaven—only that which is born of the Spirit is spirit and is, therefore, capable of inheriting a spiritual inheritance, which God reserves for spiritual men.

Have I then the work of God in my heart? Am I sure it is not my own work? If I am, experimentally, an Arminian and if I think I have proved the truth of Arminian religion, then I have no religion that will carry me to Heaven. But if, experimentally, I am compelled to confess that grace begins, that grace carries on and that grace must perfect my religion, then God having began the good work in me, I am the person for whom this verse is intended and I may sit down at this celestial banquet and eat and drink to my very full. Let each hearer, then, put these three questions to himself—Am I concerned about religion? Have I tasted the mercy of God? Is my religion God’s work? They are solemn questions—answer them!— And if you can even humbly say “Yes,” then come to this text, for the joy and comfort of it is yours.

We have three things here, first, the Believer’s confidence—“The Lord will perfect that which concerns me.” Secondly, the ground of that confidence—“Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever.” And thirdly, the result and outgrowth of his confidence expressed in the prayer—“Forsake not the works of Your own hands.”

I. First, then, THE BELIEVER’S CONFIDENCE—“The Lord will perfect that which concerns me.” I think, perhaps, the best way to preach upon a text, if we would have it remembered, is to take it word by word. Let us spell it over then, as Uncle Tom did, when he was on board of the steamer and could not read the long words, but sucked more sweetness out of the text by spelling it over, than he could have done in any other way. “The Lord.” Well, then, the Psalmist’ confidence was a Divine confidence. He did not say, “I have grace enough to perfect that which concerns me.” “My faith is so strong that I shall not fail.” “My love is so warm that it will never grow cold.” “My resolution is so firmly set that nothing can move it”—no, his dependence was on the Lord—“The Lord will perfect that which concerns me.”

And, O Christian, if you have any confidence which is not grounded on the Lord and rooted in the Rock of Ages, your confidence is worse than cream. It shall deceive you, pierce you, wound you and cast you down to your own future sorrow and grief. But here, our Psalmist himself builds upon nothing else than upon the Lord’s works. Sure as I am, the Lord began the good work in our souls, He has carried it on and if He does not finish it, it never will be complete. If there is one stitch in the celestial garment of my righteousness which I am to insert myself, then I am lost. If there is one drachma in the price of my redemption which I am to make up, then must I perish. If there is one contingency—one “if,” or “though,” or “but,” about my soul’s salvation, then am I a lost man. But this is my confidence—the Lord that began will perfect. He has done it all, must do it all, He will do it all.

My confidence must not be in what I can do, or in what I have resolved to do, but entirely in what the Lord will do. “The Lord will perfect that which concerns me.” “Oh,” says Unbelief, “you will never be able to purify yourself from sin. Look at the evil of your heart, you can never sweep that

away—look at the evil fashions and temptations of the world that beset you—you will surely be lured aside and led astray.” Ah, yes, I should indeed perish if it depended upon myself. I am but as clay upon the wheel. If I had to fashion myself into a vessel of honor, fit for the Master’s use, I might give up the work in despair. I am but as a little lamb. And if I had to travel through the wilderness by myself, I might, indeed, lie down and die. Yet if I am clay, He is my Potter and He will not suffer me to be marred upon the wheel. And if I am a lamb He is my Shepherd and He carries the lambs in His bosom—He wards off the wolf, He smites the destroyer and He brings every sheep into the fold upon the hilltop of glory. The Lord, then, is the Christian’s Divine confidence. We can never be too confident when we confide in the Lord. “Jehovah will perfect that which concerns me.”

Take the next word, “will.” So the Psalmist’s confidence was a confidence for the future. It is not only what the Lord does, but what the Lord will do. I have heard people say that they could trust a man as far as they could see him. And I have often thought that is about as far as many professors trust God—so far as they can see Him—and no farther. They believe God is good when the meat is on the table and the drink is the cup. But would they believe God if the table were bare and the cup were empty? No. They have good faith when they see the ravens coming, that they shall have their bread and meat. But if the ravens did not come, would they believe that even then their bread should be given them and their water should be sure? They can believe the thing when they get it, but until they get it they are doubting.

The Psalmist’s faith, however, deals with the future, not merely with the present. The “Lord will,” says he, the “Lord will.” He looks on all through his life and he feels sure that what God has done and is doing He will carry on even to the end. And now you that are afraid about the future, rest with us in this sweet promise. How often do you and I stand stargazing into the future and trembling, because we think we see many omens and strange sights which predict some future trouble? O child of God! Leave the future to your God. O, leave everything that is to come in the hands of Him to whom the future is already present and who knows beforehand everything that shall befall you. Draw from the present living water with which to moisten the arid desert of the future. Hatch from the altar fires of today a torch with which to light up the darkness of that which is to come. Depend on it, that He who is today your sun, shall be your sun forever—even in the darkest hour he shall shine upon you. And He who is today your shield shall be your shield forevermore. And even in the thickest part of the battle He shall catch the dart and you shall stand unharmed.

Let us turn to this word “will” once again. There is a little more in it. It does not say the “Lord may,” it does not say, “I hope He will, I trust He will,” but it says He will. “The Lord will perfect that which concerns me.” A few months after I first sought and found salvation, I enjoyed the sweet privilege of full assurance and in talking with a godly Christian I expressed myself very confidently concerning the great Truth of God that He would never forsake His people, nor leave His work undone. I was at once chided—I was told I had no right to speak so confidently, for it was presumptuous. The longer I live, the more I feel persuaded that confidence was proper and the chiding was not deserved. I believe that the happiest of Christians and the truest of Christians are those who never dare to doubt God, but who take His Word simply as it stands and believe it and ask no questions—just feeling assured that if God has said it, it will be so. The Psalmist in our text had no more doubt about his own ultimate perfection than he had about his existence. He says, “the Lord will perfect that which concerns me.” There are many things that may or may not happen, but this I know will happen—

*“He shall present my soul,  
Unblemished and complete,  
Before the glory of His face,  
With joys Divinely great.*

All the purposes of man have been defeated, but not the purposes of God. The promises of man may be broken, many of them are made to be broken, but the purposes of God shall stand and His promises shall be fulfilled. He is a promise maker, but He never was a promise breaker. He is a promise-keeping God and his people shall prove it so. Come then, you that are always hoping amidst trembling and fear, but are never confident—for once take that doubting note out of your mouth and say assuredly “the Lord will perfect that which concerns me.” If I am really His child, though full of sin, I shall one day be perfect. If I have really set my heart towards him, I shall one day see His face with joy. And let whatever foes obstruct, I shall conquer through the Lamb’s redeeming blood. He “will perfect that which concerns me.” I like to hear God’s people speak unassertively of themselves, but confidently of their God. Doubts are the greatest of sins and even though Christians have doubts, yet doubts are unchristian things. The spirit of Christ is not a spirit of doubting, but a spirit of believing. Doubts may exist in the hearts of spiritual men, but doubts are unspiritual, carnal and sinful. Let us seek to get rid of them and speak confidently where God’s Word is confident.

Now, take the next word, “The Lord will perfect.” That is a large word. Our Wesleyan Brethren have a notion that they are going to be perfect here on earth. I should be very glad to see any of them when they are perfect! And if any of them happen to be in the position of servants and want a situation, I would be happy to give them any amount of wages I could spare, for I should feel myself greatly honored and greatly blessed in having a perfect servant. And what is more, if any of them are masters and want servants, I would undertake to come and serve them without wages at all if I could but find a perfect master.

I have had a perfect Master ever since I first knew the Lord and if I could find that there is another perfect master, I should be greatly pleased in having him as an under-master, while the great Supreme must ever be chief of all. Did you ever see a perfect man? I did once. He called upon me

and wanted me to come and see him, for I should get great instruction from him if I did. I said, “I have no doubt of it, but I should not like to come into your house. I think I should be hardly able to get into your room.” How is that? “Well, I suppose your house would be so full of angels that there would be no room for me.” He did not like that. So I broke another joke or two upon his head—whereupon he went into a perfect furor. “Well Friend” I said to him, “I think I am as perfect as you, after all—do perfect men get angry?” He denied that he was angry, although there was a peculiar redness about his cheeks that is very common to persons when they are angry. At any rate I think I rather spoiled his perfection, for he evidently went home less satisfied with himself than when he went out.

I met another man who considered himself perfect, but he was thoroughly mad. And I do not believe that any of your pretenders to perfection are better than good maniacs, superior bedlamites. That is all I believe they are. For while a man has got a spark of reason left in him, he cannot, unless he is the most impudent of impostors, talk about his being perfect. What would I not give to be perfect myself! And you can say also, what would you not give to be perfect. If I must be burnt in fire, or dragged through the sea by the hair of my head—if I must be buried in the bowels of the earth, or hung up to the stars forever—if I might but be perfect, I would rejoice in any price I might have to pay for perfection! But I feel perfectly persuaded, that perfection is absolutely impossible to any man beneath the sky. And yet, I feel sure, that to every Believer, future perfection is an absolute certainty. The day shall come, Beloved, when the Lord shall not only make us better, but shall make us perfectly good. When he shall not merely subdue our lusts, but when he shall cast the demons out. When he shall make us not only tolerable and bearable and endurable, but make us holy and acceptable in His sight. That day however, I believe, shall not come until we enter into the joy of our Lord and are glorified together with Christ in Heaven.

Say, Christian, is not this a large confidence? “The Lord will make me perfect.” He will most assuredly, beyond a doubt, bring to perfection my faith, my love, my hope and every grace. He will perfect His purposes. He will perfect His promises. He will perfect my body and perfect my soul. “He will perfect that which concerns me.” And now there is the word “that”— “that which”—“The Lord will perfect that which concerns me.” Very indefinite, it seems. But how broad it is. What a broad faith the Psalmist had! “Whatever concerns me,” says he, “the Lord will perfect.” Once pardon of sin concerned me. That He has perfected. Then imputed righteousness concerned me. That He perfected. Now, sanctification troubles me. That He will perfect. One day deliverance was my fear. Now it is support. But whatever is laid upon my heart to be concerned about, this comprehensive term, “that” embraces all, be it what it may, if I have a spiritual concern upon my soul about any heavenly thing, that will God perfect.

Go on a step further. Here is a trial of faith. “The Lord will perfect that which concerns me.” Alas, Beloved, we cannot say we have any good thing without having concern for it. I suppose God never gave us a blessing, but we doubted whether we should have it before we obtained it. Somehow or other, our doubts always go before God’s mercies. Whereas we ought to believe and not to feel any anxiety and distrustful concern. My faith is sometimes tried and concerned about heavenly things now. But though that faith is tried by an inward concern about the things of God, yet it surmounts even its own doubts and cries, “The Lord will perfect even this.” Have you learned this lesson—being troubled about a thing and yet believing about it? A Christian man will find his experience to be very much like the sea. Upon the surface there is a storm and the mountain waves are rolling. But down in the depths there are caverns where quietude has reigned supreme ever since the foundations of the earth were dug—where peace, undisturbed, has had a solitary triumph.

Beloved, it is so with the Christian’s heart. Outwardly, he is concerned about these things. He doubts, he fears, he trembles. But in his inmost heart, down in the depths of his soul, he is without a fear and he can say confidently, “The Lord will perfect that which concerns me.” But I hasten to dwell upon the last word. The faith of our text is a personal faith. “The Lord will perfect that which concerns me.” Here is the loudest note of all. This is the handle whereby we must lay hold of this sword if we would use it aright—“that which concerns me.” Oh, it is a sweet truth to know and believe that God will perfect all His saints—‘tis sweeter still to know that “He will perfect me.” It is blessed to believe that all God’s people shall persevere. But the essence of delight is to feel that I shall persevere through Him.

Many persons are content with a kind of general religion, an universal salvation. They belong to a Christian community. They have joined a Christian Church and they think they shall be saved in the lump—in the mass. But give me a personal religion. What is all the bread in the world, unless I myself feed upon it? I am starved, though Egypt is full of corn. What are all the rivers that run from the mountains to the sea, if I am thirsty? Unless I drink myself what are all these? If I am poor and in rags, you do but mock me if you tell me that Potosi’s mines are full of treasure. You do but laugh at me if you speak of Golconda’s diamonds. What care I for these, unless I have some participation for myself? But if I can say even of my crust, “It is my own,” then I can eat it with a grateful heart. That crust which is my own is more precious than all the granaries of Egypt if they are not my own. This promise even if it were smaller would be more precious than the largest promise that stands in the Bible, if I could but see my right to it personally myself.

But now, by humble faith, sprinkled with the blood of Christ, resting in His merits, trusting in His death I come to the text—and say throughout this year and every year—“The Lord will perfect that which concerns me”— unworthy me, lost and ruined me. He will yet save me. And—

*“I, among the blood-washed throng,  
Shall wave the palm and wear the crown, And shout loud victory.”*

This, then, is the Believer’s confidence. May God grant you the same! II. The second thing is THE GROUND OF THIS CONFIDENCE. The ground of it is this—“Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever.” The Believer is sure he shall be saved. Why? Because of his merits? No. Because of the strength of his own faith? No. Because he has something which will recommend him to God? No. He believes he shall be perfected because of God’s mercy. Is it not a strange thing that the advanced Believer, when he reaches to the very height of piety, just comes to the spot where he commenced? Do we not begin at the Cross and when we have climbed ever so high, is it not at the Cross that we end? I know my pilgrimage shall never end to my heart’s content till at His Cross again I cast my wreath and lay my honors down.

My sins I laid there and anything else that He has given me I would lay there, too. You began there and your watchword is the Cross. While yet the hosts are preparing for the battle, it is the Cross. And you have fought the fight and your sword is red with blood and your head is crowned with triumph. And what is the watchword now? The Cross. That which is our strength in battle is our boast in victory. Mercy must be the theme of our song here. And mercy enduring forever must be the subject of the sonnets of Paradise. None other can be fit for sinners—no, and none other can be fit for grateful saints.

Come then, Beloved, let us just look at this ground of our confidence and see whether it will bear our weight. It is said that elephants, when they are going to cross a bridge, are always very careful to sound it, to see whether it will bear them. If they see a horse going over safely that is not enough, for they say to themselves, “I am an elephant and I must see whether it will bear me.” Now, we should always do the same with a promise and with the groundwork of a promise. The promise may have been proved by others before you, but if you feel yourselves to be like huge elephantine sinners, you want to be quite certain whether the arches of the promise are quite strong enough to bear the weight of your sins. Now, I say, here is God’s mercy. Ah, this is indeed all-sufficient. What was it that first led the Lord to bring you and me into the Covenant at all? It was mercy, pure mercy. We were dead in sin. We had not any merits to recommend us, for some of us used to curse and swear like infidels. Some of us were drunkards, sinners of the deepest dye. And why did God save us? Simply because He has said, “I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy.”—

*“What was there in you that could merit esteem, Or give the Creator delight?”*

‘Twas mercy. Well, then, if mercy made God choose me, if He chose me from no other motive than mercy, if that mercy is always the same, He will always choose me and always will love me. Do you not know it is a rule which none can dispute, that the same cause must always produce the same effect? We are told that the volcano is caused by certain fires within the earth, which must find their vent. Now, as long as there are those inward fires and they are in a condition to require the vent, the vent they must have. When the cause is the same, the effect must be the same. The sole cause then, of the salvation of any man is the mercy of God and not his merits. God does not look at you whether you are a good man or a bad man. He does not save you because of anything in yourself, but because He will do as He pleases and because He loves to act

 mercifully—that is His only reason.

Oh, My God, if You loved me when I had not any faith, You will not cast me away because my faith is now weak. If You loved me when I had all my sin about me, You will not leave off loving me now that You have pardoned me. If You loved me when I was in my rage and beggary and filth, when there was nothing to recommend me—at least, my God, I am not further fallen than I was then, or, if I am, the same boundless mercy that loved me when I was lost will surely love me, even as I am now. Do you not see it is because the basis of eternal love is that on which we build we derive this inference, that if the base cannot move, the pyramid will not? “The mercy of God endures forever—the Lord will perfect that which concerns me.”

Note the very words of the text—“Your mercy, O Lord” David brings his confidence into the court of Divine inspection, in order that it may there be proved. He says, “The Lord will perfect that which concerns me.” It is very well for you and me to speak thus here this morning, but dare we go up to the very temple of God and there, feeling His presence, actually present our confidence before Him and ask Him to try it? There are many hypocrites in the world that would tremble to play the hypocrite if they felt that they were in the presence of God. But here we have a man that dares to bring his faith to God’s tribunal. He puts it in the scales of infinite justice and waits the decision. “Your mercy, O Lord.” Can you do the same? Who among us can cry out with Toplady—

*“The terrors of law and of God,  
With me can have nothing to do,  
My Savior’s obedience and blood,  
Hide all my transgressions from view.”*

Can you come into God’s presence and say this, or, to quote Hart’s words, can you say—  
*“Great God I’m clean,  
Through Jesus’ blood I’m clean.”*  
He that can say that is blessed, indeed. The Lord shall perfect that which concerns him.  
Ah, what if God’s mercy towards men should change? Blessed be His name it cannot. It endures forever. But what if He should remove His mercy from one man to another? That also He will never do. It endures forever. But suppose we should sin so much that God’s mercy should give way? It cannot give way. It endures all the weight of sin. It endures forever. But what if we should live in sin so long that at last God denied mercy to us even though we believed in Him? That cannot be. We cannot sin longer than forever—His mercy cannot be tried longer and even if it could be tried forever it would endure forever. All the weight of my trouble, all the weight of my backsliding, all the weight of my evil heart of unbelief—all these the everlasting arches of Divine mercy can and will sustain. Those arches never shall rock. The stone never shall be crumbled. It never shall be swept away by even the floods of eternity itself. Because His mercy endures forever, God will most assuredly perfect the work of His hands. And now I come to the third and last point and here may the Holy Spirit help me to stir up your minds to prayer.  
III. The third particular is—THE RESULT OF THE BELIEVER’S CONFIDENCE—it leads him to prayer. Away with those men who have a confidence that helps them to live without prayer. There are men that live in this world who say we do not need evidences, we do not need prayer, we do not need good works. “The Lord has appeared of old unto me and said unto me, You are one of God’s elect and you may live in sin and do whatever you please, I will save you at last.” Such characters I hope are getting rare. Alas, there are certain places of worship where such a religion as that is fostered if it is not begotten. There are some ministers—I trust they hardly know what they are about—who by leaving out the doctrine of man’s responsibility, naturally lead men into that guilty and abominable doctrine of Antinomianism which has done so much to injure the cause of Christ.  
Hear then, you seed of the presumptuous and you that bear the whores’ forehead, hear and tremble. The Lord has not chosen you, neither has He cut your name into His lap. He has chosen no man who lives and dies presumptuously, trusting that he is chosen when he has no evidence of it. Do you live without prayer? Ah, soul—election has nothing to do with you. What is intended by the doctrine of reprobation is far more likely to be your lot than the glorious inheritance of election. Do you live in sin, that grace may abound! Every man’s damnation is just, but yours shall be emphatically so. What? Do you dare to pawn yourself off as a child of God when you are a brat of Hell? Do you claim that you are a heir of light, when the damning mark of Cain is on your very forehead? What? When you are like Balaam, presumptuous and abominable, do you dare still to claim any part in the inheritance of the saints in light? Away with your confidence. “Hail shall sweep away your refuge of lies.” The true-born child of God has a spot that is not like your spot. He is of a different mold and make from you. You are a deceiver—not the legitimate child of God. Mark, my Friends, in the text, that a genuine confidence in God does not lead us to give up prayer, but leads us to prayer. “The Lord will perfect me.” Am I, therefore to say, “He will do it and I will not pray?” No, because He will do it, therefore will I pray. Many persons have such shallow minds that they cannot perceive how God’s determination and our own free action can go together. I never find these people making the same mistake in common life they do on religious subjects. A man says to me, “Now, Sir, if God intends to save me, I need do nothing.” He knows he is a fool when he says it. Or if he does not know it, I will soon make him see it. Suppose he says, again, “If the Lord intends to feed me, He will feed me and I will go without my dinner. If the Lord intends to give me a harvest, He will give me a harvest and I shall not sow any wheat and I shall not plow.” Suppose another were to say, “If the Lord intends to keep me warm today, He will do it. So I will not put on my coat.” Suppose a man should say, again, “If the Lord intends me to go to bed tonight, I shall go to bed. And, therefore, I shall not walk towards home, but sit here as long as I like.” You smile at once, because the folly is self-convicting. But is it not just the same in religion? Because “the Lord will perfect that which concerns me,” am I to say I shall not pray? Why, no, my dear Friends, the fact is, that a knowledge that a thing is certain prompts a wise man to action. What made Oliver Cromwell fight so bravely, but because he felt convinced that he should conquer? He did not say, “I shall conquer, therefore I will not fight.” No, he said, “I know that I shall conquer—therefore keep your powder dry, trust in God and aim at ‘em!” So with you. If you believe the Lord will perfect that which concerns you, begin with prayer. Trust the promise and let us go on cheerfully through the world, rejoicing in the Lord our God. Confidence must not lead to idleness, but to diligent activity.  
And now, note this prayer—“Forsake not the works of Your own hands.” The prayer is full of confession. It must be that, or else it is never true prayer. The Psalmist confesses that if God did forsake him it would be all over with him and this is a Truth of God, Brethren, that you and I ought ever to keep in mind. We sometimes pray that God will not forsake us in temptation—do you not know we should be as much lost if he were to forsake us in communion as if he were to forsake us in temptation? When God puts you on the pinnacle of the temple, you need say, “Lord, hold me up and I shall be safe; do not forsake me here.” When you are down on the ground, if the Lord were to forsake you, there you would perish just as easily as on the pinnacle of the temple. I have known the Christian on his knees in the den of leopards, cry, “Lord, save me now,” but do you know that he has as great a need of help when he is on the top of Pisgah? For he still needs to be kept. Every moment of our life we are on the brink of Hell and if the Lord should forsake us, we should certainly perish. Let Him but withdraw the salt of His Grace and the proudest Believer must be cast into the depths of Hell and fall, like Lucifer, never to rise again. Oh, let this always make us cry aloud, “Forsake us not, O God.”  
There is yet another confession in the text—the Psalmist’s confession that all he has he has from God. “Forsake not the works of Your own hands.” I will not, however, dwell upon it, but urge you who are Believers to go home and cry aloud to God in prayer. Let this be a New Year’s Day prayer. “Forsake not the work of Your hands, Father, forsake not Your little child, lest he die by the hand of the enemy. Shepherd, forsake not Your lamb, lest the wolves devour him. Great Husbandman, forsake not Your little plant, lest the frost should nip it and it should be destroyed. Forsake me not, O Lord now and when I am old and gray-headed, O Lord, forsake me not. Forsake me not in my joys, lest I curse You. Forsake me not in my sorrows, lest I murmur against You. Forsake me not in the day of my repentance, lest I lose the hope of pardon and fall into despair. And forsake me not in the day of my strongest faith, lest my faith degenerate into presumption and so I perish by my own hand.”  
Cry out to God, that He would not forsake you in your business, in your family. That He would not forsake you either upon your bed by night, or in your business by day. And may God grant, when you and I shall come to the end of this year, we may have a good tale to tell concerning the faithfulness of God in having answered our prayers and having fulfilled His promise. I would now this day crave a part in your prayers. My dear Friends, I am confident that God will perfect that which concerns me. There has been a work done in this place and God has blessed the congregation. But the work is not perfect yet. It is not enough to rouse other ministers to preach the Word. I hope I shall never, while I live, cease to have another project always in hand. When one thing is done, we will do something else. If we have tried to make ministers more diligent in preaching, we must try to make the Churches more earnest in praying. When we have built our new Chapel, we must build something else. We must always have something in hand. If I have preached the Gospel in England, it must be my privilege to preach it across the sea yet. And when I have preached it there, I must solicit a longer leave of absence that I may preach it in other countries and act as a missionary throughout the nations.

I am confident that God will perfect that which concerns me, I rely on that. Do I therefore say that you need not pray? Oh, no. Pray that He would not forsake the work of His own hands. This work is not of our own hands. This labor of love is not mine, but God’s. I have done nothing, except as the instrument. He has done it all. Oh, my dear Friends, you that love me as a Brother in Christ and as your pastor in the Church, go home and plead with God for me this day and henceforth, that He would not forsake His work. Plead that the fire which has been kindled here may run along the ground, till all England shall be in a blaze with a revival of Grace and godliness. Be not content to warm your hands at the sparks of this fire. Ask that the breath of God’s Spirit may blow the sparks across the sea, that other lands may catch the flames, till the whole earth burning as a holocaust to Heaven, shall be accepted as a whole burnt offering before the Throne of God Most High.  
“May the Lord bless you and keep you and cause His face to shine upon you and lift up the light of His countenance upon you and give you peace,” and unto the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, shall be glory forever!

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GOD’S THOUGHTS AND OURS  
NO. 3246

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 20, 1911.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 19, 1868.

*“How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!”  
Psalm 139:17.*

[Another Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon upon verses 17 and 18 is #2609, Volume 45— OUR THOUGHTS ABOUT GOD’S THOUGHTS  
—Read/download the entire sermon free of charge at http://www.spurgeongems.org. ]

IT is very comforting to us to believe in a personal God and to be able to confide in One who condescends to think lovingly of us, considers our needs and supplies them. It would not be very comforting to us to believe in a mere abstract Deity, or in what some people call, “the laws of Nature” acting by themselves apart from God, or in a fixed fate that would crush us like some colossal car of Juggernaut. Yet some people seem to be always struggling to get away from the thought of one true personal God—Creator, Preserver, Redeemer and All-in-All to His people. Those who deny the Inspired record of the Creation would have us believe that we are descended from monkeys, or from something with even less intelligence than an ape possesses! But I could gather no comfort from such a belief as that if it were true. It fills me rather with pity or contempt for those who can be so foolish as to cherish such a delusion. But when I come back to the Revelation of the Bible concerning a personal God—a Revelation which has been confirmed by my own spiritual experience— and when I realize that this personal God takes a special interest in me and thinks of me with tender, loving, gracious consideration, then I lift up my hands in adoring wonder and say, as David did, “How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!” Yes, there is great comfort in being able truthfully to say, “Our Father, who are in Heaven”—and those who are really the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty find it to be their chief delight that He thinks about them and plans all that is for their present and eternal good!

I. Coming to our text, I ask you to consider, first, HOW PRECIOUS ARE GOD’S THOUGHTS OF US AND HOW PRECIOUS IT IS TO US TO THINK ABOUT THESE THOUGHTS.

First of all, let me say that the very fact that God thinks of us is, in itself, precious. Perhaps someone here says, “It is not so in my case! I am quite alarmed at the thought that God thinks about me. It is no comfort to me to say, ‘You, God, see me.’ Such a thought as that only fills me with terror.” I can quite understand, dear Friend, how you feel. Of course, if you only think of God as if He were an officer of justice with a warrant for your apprehension, it would be a dreadful thing for you to realize that He is thinking of you. But suppose you were His child— would it not then be a continual joy to you to reflect that your heavenly Father was constantly thinking of you? If you were completely reconciled to Him by the death of His Son. If no consciousness of guilt remained upon your conscience. If you knew that all God’s thoughts concerning you were thoughts of love—then you would bless His name that He was so gracious and kind as to think of you!

Further, those who are serving the Lord delight to remember that He is thinking of them. After we have been reconciled to God, it becomes our great privilege to spend such strength as we have in promoting His Glory. Well, no one is ashamed of being sent on a good errand! The eyes of God, instead of being dreadful to the man whose heart is right with Him, is one of His greatest encouragements! He feels that though his fellow men may never say, “Well done, good and faithful servant,” it will be enough for him to know that God has seen him, that God keeps a Book of Remembrances, and that, at the last, a full reward, not of debt, but of Grace, shall be given to him who is faithful. I do not know how it is with you idle professors who profess to be saved, but who do little or nothing for Christ—I do not see how the fact that God is observing you can give you any comfort. If it is true that you are not your own, but that you are bought with a price, even with the precious blood of Jesus, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, can you calmly think of God watching your idle hours, listening to your many words that have no weight, no value in them and noting how you neglect your many opportunities of serving your day and generation? But, on the other hand, in proportion as you are constrained by the love of Christ to be instant in season and out of season, in the same proportion will it be sweet to you to remember that the Lord is observing you and that He is always at your right hand to help you in your service for Him!

We also learn the preciousness of God’s thoughts to us as we depend implicitly upon Him as the great Lord of Providence. It is of little use to you to have anyone thinking of you if his thoughts never bring you any practical help. But if you have a rich friend who has promised, as soon as possible, to find you a position in which you will be provided for as long as you live, I would not be surprised to hear that even while you have been at this service, you have been gratefully thinking of him. “Yes,” you have been saying, “I could not make my way on my own account, but I have a friend at my back who says that he will see that I shall never be in need—and it comforts me to think that he is thinking of me.” Well then, if the promise of an earthly friend affords so much consolation as that, how much more should this be the case with you who have a heavenly Friend who is both able and willing to fulfill all His promises? He is always thinking of what is best for you—what you require today and what you will require tomorrow—He is always anticipating your needs, providing Elims, with wells and palm trees while you are travelling through the desert. And as you meditate upon the way in which He is thinking of how He shall bless, perfect and glorify you, His thoughts must, indeed, be precious to you!

One reason why God’s thoughts concerning us are peculiarly precious is that gracious men long to get near to God. They are not satisfied with what they are. The wanderings of their thoughts towards inferior objects are a burden to them and they are continually longing to get nearer to God. If there is one cry that rises more frequently to our lips than any other, it is this—

*“Nearer, my God, to You,*

*Nearer to You!”*  
But, alas, our thoughts of God are a very poor help to us in drawing us nearer to Him! They flag, tire and soon die—but the thoughts of God toward us are strong, like God, Himself, is—and these, like so many unbreakable cords firmly fastened to us, are drawing us always nearer to Him! Thought leads to action and God’s thinking of us leads to the practical action of drawing us nearer to Himself. So the fact that He is continually thinking of us encourages us to believe that we shall one day be close to Him and be qualified to be close to Him—being perfectly conformed to the image of Christ—and drawn into the closest possible fellowship with God.

And the nearer we get to God, the more precious will His thoughts of us become to us. If we were not such babes in Christ and so carnal, we would prize every crumb from our Father’s table—and much more—every thought from our Father’s mind! We would prize, far above gold and rubies, what I may call the ordinary outgoings of the Divine mind in His Providential arrangements for us. But much more should we value those deep, eternal, infinite thoughts which have already secured our salvation and which shall, before long, complete our sanctification and our glorification, too!

II. Now, secondly, there are SOME POINTS IN CONNECTION WITH GOD’S THOUGHTS OF US WHICH RENDER THEM ALL THE MORE PRECIOUS TO US.

And, first, let us remember that God’s thoughts of us are everlasting. When we begin to think of Jehovah’s thoughts of love concerning His people, we have to go back beyond the region of time and get where all dates are lost in the shoreless sea of eternity! Beloved, you were loved of your God long before He created the world! Yes, from everlasting He had thoughts of love toward you—then must not those thoughts be, indeed, precious to you? Besides, as they were from eternity, so they will be to eternity—God will still be thinking lovingly of you when sun, moon and stars have fulfilled their mission and been forgotten—and when all things which men now count solid and lasting shall have dissolved like the bubble upon the billow’s crest and passed away forever! God has so linked you with His Son that He has made you also to have a life which is eternal and which can never die. Let all things perish and the pillars of the universe crumble and decay, and the whole visible creation fall with thunderous crash, yet you, the Beloved of the Lord, shall dwell safely with Him!—

*“Far from a world of grief and sin*

*With God eternally shut in.”*  
His thoughts will always be directed towards you, He will never forget you! There has never been a moment in the past when He did not think of you. Even in your years of sin, He looked upon you with an eye of pity. In your deepest depression His heart was full of sympathy for you. Never has there been an hour, in the silent watches of the night, or amid the cares and businesses of the day, in which He has not always been thinking of you just as much as if you were the only being He had ever created! The Lord has from the first been looking upon you and thinking of you as though you were the sole center of His undivided attention— and so will He continue to think of you incessantly!

The Lord’s thoughts of you are especially precious because they have always been thoughts of love. Even when you were dead in trespasses and sins and He hated your sins, He did not hate you, for He had loved you with an everlasting love—

*“He saw you ruined in the Fall,  
Yet loved you, notwithstanding all.  
He saved you from your lost estate,  
His loving kindness oh, how great!”*

This is the love of which Paul wrote to the Ephesians, “His great love wherewith He loved us even when we were dead in sins.”And ever since your conversion, God’s thoughts concerning you have been thoughts of love. He has smitten you sorely until you have felt that surely He must be your enemy, but it was not so—never has there been anything but love for you in the great eternal heart of God. If—

*“With afflictions He may scourge us,*

*Send a cross for every day”—*  
this is not a proof of His anger toward us—on the contrary, it is a token of His affection—

*“All to make us  
Sick of self, and fond of Him.”*

Besides this, God’s thoughts of us have always been wise thoughts. They have not been such casual thoughts as pass through men’s minds while journeying quickly by road or rail and merely noticing this object here and that other object over yonder. But God’s thoughts have infinitely more in them than the deepest thoughts of men can ever have. You know that there are many ways of thinking of a certain thing—you may think of it in such a way as just to keep it in remembrance, or you may think of it so intently as to lie awake at night, turning it over in your mind, looking at it from all points of view so that you may understand it in all its bearings. You may think of it with the careful consideration that a barrister gives to an important case for which he is about to plead, or that an inventor gives to the intricate details of a machine that he is seeking to perfect. Such consideration as that, only of an infinitely higher order, God gives to every one of His people! He is continually arranging that which is most for the good in His Providential dealings with them and constantly thinking and working on their behalf with the ultimate view of bringing many sons unto Glory. God’s thoughts are always wise, but they are so high above our thoughts that we cannot attain to them! Yet the more we are able to comprehend them, the more wisdom and prudence shall we perceive in them.

Once more, these thoughts of God towards us are pre-eminently practical. God so thought of you, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, as to ordain you unto eternal life! Concerning the whole Church of the living God this decree was pronounced, “They shall be Mine, says the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels.” Not only was there a Divine Decree concerning them, but there was an Eternal Covenant made between the Father and the Son by which the everlasting salvation of all the chosen is Infallibly secured! More than that, in the fullness of time, those eternal thoughts of love took practical effect in the gift of God’s only-begotten and well-beloved Son to die for His people, “the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.” These thoughts of God further took effect by the coming into our hearts of the Holy Spirit so that now, through His Divine power and energy, we have been converted, renewed in the spirit of our minds, helped thus far towards Heaven and comforted with the full assurance that we shall, in due time, be brought into our heavenly Father’s immediate Presence, unblemished and complete! So you see, Beloved, that the thoughts of God toward us should be exceedingly precious to us because they are of such a practical character that they bring to us all the blessings—temporal and spiritual—which we daily enjoy.

III. Now, thirdly, let us briefly notice SOME TIMES WHEN GOD’S THOUGHTS ARE PECULIARLY PRECIOUS TO US.  
It is so when we have been betrayed and deserted by some in whom we have confided. When he that ate bread with us has lifted up his heel against us, then we turn to our ever-faithful Friend and we rejoice to know that His thoughts concerning us are never false and treacherous! He is the Friend who sticks closer than a brother. He is always true even though everyone else should prove to be a liar. Ahithopel may forsake his king, Judas may betray his Lord and we, in our measure, may know what it is to be forsaken and betrayed—but God’s thoughts towards us shall, all the while, be thoughts of love and faithfulness! Vain was the trust we reposed in some who went out from us because they were not of us! But God has never forsaken us, He has always been thinking of us for good and, therefore, His thoughts are peculiarly precious to us.  
So are they also when we are neglected by our fellow Christians and by others who ought to esteem us. It must be very hard to continue toiling on in some obscure sphere without having a kind word or a cheering smile from anyone—to be living, perhaps, as a servant in a family and striving to do your duty faithfully—yet never meeting with the slightest encouragement from those at the head of the household. Or to be earnestly working as a Bible-woman or a city missionary in some back district and having so little success that your superintendent looks upon you as if you were doing nothing! I can imagine how painful this must be to your sensitive spirit and how comforting it is to you to think, “Well Jesus knows all about it and His thoughts are worth far more than the thoughts of men, for He can read my heart and He can see that it is love to Him that constrains me to do what I can in His service. Men may call me a fool, but if my Master knows that I only desire to be a fool for His sake—if He considers that I am faithfully serving Him to the best of my ability— how precious will His thoughts be to me!”  
This is also especially the case when our words and actions are misconstrued and misrepresented. Some of us know what this trial means. When we have tried to be disinterested and have really been so, men have said that we have acted from some sinister motive. When we have spoken with the utmost plainness and simplicity, we have often been misunderstood and, worse than that, we have been willfully misrepresented! Well, what then? Our heavenly Father knows the sincerity of our motives and the meaning of our words, so we take the whole case away from this lower court where human tongues jangle and cause strife, and we appeal to the Supreme Court of King’s Bench in Heaven! Our petition is, “O Lord, You give the verdict in this case! You know who has desired to serve You faithfully and to speak Your Truth with courage! You give a righteous decision which none can deny!”At such times as these, the fact that God thinks upon us is peculiarly precious to us.  
So is it in times of perplexity when we are, as Bunyan said, “all tumbled up and down in our thoughts.” I suppose, dear Friend, you sometimes get into such a condition that although you have all the forces of Omnipotence at your disposal, you are so distracted that you do not know how to make use of them. You are in a place where two seas meet—wave upon wave rolls over you and you fear that you will be overwhelmed. You do not know what to do! You cannot think of any way of escape out of your perplexity. Well then, do not try to do it—cease from even thinking about the matter and refer it to the Great Thinker who can bring good out of evil, light out of darkness and order out of confusion!  
God’s thoughts are also precious to us when our own thoughts are bright and cheerful. The genuine Christian does not run to his God merely in his times of trouble, but he delights himself in the Lord at all times, and under all circumstances! He thinks of Him when he is in the land of drought, but he does not forget Him in the land of peace and plenty, for he sings then—  
*“If peace and plenty crown my days  
They help me, Lord, to speak Your praise.”*Let your brightest thoughts, Beloved, always be those that concern your Lord! And above all the joys of earth let this joy rise to the very zenith— that your heavenly Father thinks of you! This is a better fortune for you than thousands of gold and silver! This is a better protection for you than the friendship of ten thousand times ten thousand earthly friends! This a greater consolation than all the comforts of time can ever afford you! In your brightest hours, Believer, I hope that you will still say with the Psalmist, “How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!”  
IV. My time has gone, but I want to give you just A FEW PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS ARISING OUT OF THIS SUBJECT.  
The first is this—if God’s thoughts are so precious to us, how very precious His Words ought to be! Here, in this Inspired Volume, you have the thoughts of the Divine Thinker, Incarnated, if I may use the word in that sense and, therefore, I would have you prize very highly every Word in this blessed Book. There are many, nowadays, who refuse to believe in the verbal Inspiration of the Scriptures, but I fail to see how the sense of Scripture can be Inspired if the Words in which that sense is expressed are not also Inspired! I believe that the very Words, in the original Hebrew and Greek, were revealed from Heaven! And notwithstanding every objection that can be brought from any quarter, I have never been able to get away from the firm belief that if I give up my Master’s Words, I give up His thoughts, also. I cannot well love a man’s soul without having an affection for his body, also. And I cannot love God’s thoughts, which are the soul of His Revelation, without loving the Words which are the body in which it comes to us. Do not tamper with the Words of Scripture, nor even with a single letter of it, but say, “How precious also are Your

 Words unto me, O God!” Have we not known times when the blessing which we have derived from a text has come to our hearts, not so much from the main thought contained in it, as from the use of one special Word? Some of us, on turning to our Greek Testaments, have been perfectly astounded to find that a particular Word has been used which has exactly met the predicament in which we have been placed—and if the Holy Spirit had moved the writer to use any other word, it would not have been so suitable to the circumstances in which we then were! We praise Him for selecting that very word and not any one of its synonyms which would not so precisely have met our case. Therefore, Brothers and Sisters in Christ, prize the Words of God above everything else that you possess!  
Oh, for more Bible reading! I fear that this is an age when almost everything else is read except that which is most worth reading! I believe that many professedly Christian people positively poison their minds and stop up all the avenues of sense with the masses of sawdust, chaff and smut that they get out of their light reading—which a man might read to all eternity without ever being the better for it! Yet, all the while, there are solid, sober, interesting books full of valuable information and instruction that are left unread and, worst of all, God’s Book, the Bible, itself, is lying neglected upon the shelf! True Bible readers and Bible searchers never find it wearisome. They like it least who know it least and they love it most who read it most. They find it newest who have known it longest, and they find the pasture to be the richest whose souls have been the longest fed upon it. When one of our missionaries had to read a certain Book of the Old Testament through a hundred times while he was translating it, he said that he certainly enjoyed the 100th time of reading it more than he did the first, for he understood it better and it seemed to him to be fuller and fresher, the more familiar he became with it.  
In the next place, as God’s thoughts are so precious to us, God’s actions, which spring from His thoughts, ought also to be precious to His people. They ought to be so, but are they? Perhaps one of God’s actions has been to lay low in sickness one who is very dear to you—can you say to God, “How precious is that action”? No. You shake your head, for you cannot say that. Possibly you have had a great loss, today, and that loss came by the direction of God. Now, God first thought. Then He acted and took away something that you greatly prized. You say that you cannot see any preciousness in that—but if you judged according to faith, and not according to sense, you would say—“Yes, Lord, this trial is precious to me because I believe it comes from You. And I will not only submit to it, but I will thank You for it, and even fall in love with the cross which You have laid on me.” As we look back over our past experience, we see how precious our trials have been to us. Someone said, “Give me back my bed of languishing. Give me back the aches and pains that I suffered in that long, trying illness if I may but have such enjoyment of my Master’s Presence as I had then.”  
Now, in closing, let me just say that as God’s thoughts are so precious to us, we should make the best return we can by thinking much of Him. You, Believer, are married to Christ. And as your Husband is always thinking of you, can you be content to live without thinking often of Him? Have you lived through this day in forgetfulness of Him? Have you been so occupied with the toils and cares of this life that you have forgotten Him who has given you a higher, nobler and better life than this? If that has been the case with you, then blush for very shame and ask forgiveness of your Lord—and let this be your sincere prayer—“Lord Jesus, You are always thoughtful of me. From now on, by Your gracious Spirit’s blessed working, make me always thinking of You.”  
I fear that I am addressing a great many who do not often think of God and that there are some of you to who it would be a comfort if there were no God at all. Or, if you do think of Him at all, He is only an all-powerful Being of whom you stand in dread because you fear that He will punish you for your sins. Then take warning, by your own thoughts of God and seek to be reconciled to Him so that you may no longer have cause to fear His righteous anger! That reconciliation may be obtained by simple faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the one Mediator between God and men! So if you put your case into His hands and ask Him to act as your Advocate, He will, by His Spirit, reveal to you the glorious Truth of God that the reconciliation was effected long ago, when He laid down His life for you upon the Cross of Calvary! Then, when you have received this blessed assurance, it shall be your continual delight to think of God, and your constant bliss to know that He is thinking of you. And you will say, in the words of our text, “How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!”

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 119:105-120.**

We will read tonight two of the stanzas which make up the 119th Psalm, beginning at the 105th verse.  
Verse 105. Your Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. God’s Word is full of brilliance. It is always giving out its blessed light. It casts a light upon all our daily life. It is a light for the house and a light for the way, and happy is the man who never walks abroad without this lantern to light up his pathway! There are many pitfalls on the road and many places where the traveler’s garments may soon be smeared, so he has great need of this light to guide him.  
106. I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep Your righteous judgments. I scarcely remember ever hearing of a man swearing and then approving of it, but this kind of swearing is right enough—“I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep Your righteous judgments.” We are to determine with the most vehement resolution that, God helping us, we will keep His righteous judgments, for if we have only a weak resolution, we usually fall short even of our own determination. What shall we do, then, if that determination is itself weak? Some of us have lifted our hands to Heaven and pledged ourselves to the living God that we will be His faithful people—  
107. I am afflicted very much. Here is a good man, a better man than most of us, a man who is determined to do right, yet he gets into trouble because he is determined to do right. God’s wheat will be threshed. His gold will be put into the furnace. If you were worth nothing to Him, God might not take the trouble to afflict you, but when you are resolved to do right, you may expect that resolution to be tried and tested! And if it is worth anything, it will stand the trial. “I am afflicted very much”—what will be the next words, “Lord, deliver me”? No, no! “Lord, bring me out of the furnace”? Nothing of the sort! “I am afflicted very much”—  
107. Quicken me, O LORD, according unto Your Word. “Give me more spiritual life! Give me more spiritual strength! That is what I most need.” Oftentimes that prayer is answered by the affliction, itself—we are afflicted very much and by that very affliction the Lord quickens our Divine Graces, strengthens our souls, drives away many of our wandering thoughts and brings us nearer to Himself!  
108. Accept, I beseech You, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD. “My prayers, my praises, my testimonies, my ministries—accept them all, O Lord”—  
108. And teach me Your judgment. He who teaches others needs teaching himself. He who hopes that what he says will be accepted by those who hear it, opens his ears to hear what God says to him. There will be no acceptance of what you say to others unless you accept what God says to you!  
109. My soul is continually in my hand. David’s life was often in jeopardy. Saul hunted him as a partridge upon the mountains and he afterwards fled from Absalom. He was sometimes very sick and ready to die. Perhaps also, at times, he was in such great sorrow that he felt as if his soul was a thing that he held in his hand. We do not know exactly where our soul is, but we usually think of it as being somewhere in the very center of our being. David says that he had his soul in his hand— where he might at any time lose it. But what else does he say?  
109. Yet do I not forget Your Law. “If I have even to die for it, I am willing to die for it. If I have to lay down my life because I will do right, I will do right even while I lay down my life.”  
110. The wicked have laid a snare for me: yet I erred not from Your precepts. “If I had done so, I should have been caught in their snare, but as I kept straight on in the way of Your precepts, it little mattered how many snares they laid for me.”  
111. Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever. Some take their own thoughts for their heritage, but it is a poor portion for anyone to have. Some take other men’s philosophies for their heritage, but such a heritage as that is soon gone. But some of us can say, with regard to the Eternal and Immutable Truth of God, that we have got such a grip of it that we cannot give it up! There may come a thousand other changes but, by God’s Grace, there will be no change in this matter! “Your testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever.”  
111. For they are the rejoicing of my heart. [See Sermon #2415, Volume 41—THE

*“High Heaven, that heard the solemn vow, That vow renewed shall daily hear.”*  
BELIEVER’S HERITAGE OF JOY—Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at

http://www.spurgeongems.org.] Well may a man love that which rightly makes him glad. Shall we ever forsake that which is the source of our greatest comfort? If some men had greater gladness in the Gospel, they would be more true to it. If they had ever eaten the sweet, and enjoyed the fat things full of marrow, they would never go away from the old old Gospel which has made their hearts so glad!

112, 113. I have inclined my heart to perform Your statues always, even unto the end. I hate vain thoughts: but Your Law do I love. Notice that the word, “vain,” is not in the original. The Psalmist wrote, “I hate thoughts,” yet the word for thoughts includes the idea of mere thoughts. So, if any teaching in the world is the result of human thought, alone, you may not rely upon it for a moment, for the Lord knows the thoughts of man, that “they are vanity,” and they never will be anything better than that. The thoughts even of the most profound and the best instructed of men will not bear the weight and pressure of an immortal soul’s eternal interests! Revelation is the one reliable thing that we can rest upon. What God has spoken is all true, but as for what men have thought, I have been so often disappointed and deceived that I can say with the Psalmist, “I hate mere thoughts, but Your Law do I love.” In the Law of the Lord there are verities, certainties, immutabilities—here may we abide and rest securely!

114. You are my hiding place and my shield: I hope in Your Word. For You will be sure to do as You have said. Your promises are not like men’s—they cannot be broken—and when I get one of Your promises, O my God, I hide behind it, I am protected by it and I am comforted through it.

115. Depart from me, you evildoers: for I will keep the commandments of my God. Holy men often find that in order to be holy, they have to be solitary. It sometimes happens that the force of evil companionship is too much for the gracious heart to bear—and the Christian has to say to the ungodly, “Depart from me.” Now, if even godly David had to say to evildoers, “Depart from me,” you need not wonder that the Lord Jesus Christ will one day say to all impenitent men, “Depart from Me, you evildoers.” If we keep the commandments of our God, we shall often have to walk in a separate path from the ungodly. And even if we do not keep ourselves to ourselves, we shall keep ourselves to our God.

116. Uphold me—I thought we should soon come to that petition. We have been reading about David’s resolutions and we might have thought that he was too bold in speaking so positively, but now he shows us the modesty of his mind—“Uphold me”—

116. According unto Your Word, that I may live. The Lord upholds us as a nurse holds up a little child and teaches him to walk. ‘Uphold me,’ O Lord, for I cannot stand by myself. My good resolutions will soon evaporate unless You sustain me.” There is a gracious promise which just answers this petition, “I will uphold you with the right hand of My righteousness.”

116. And let me not be ashamed of my hope. “O my God, never let me have to say that I have hoped in You in vain! I know I never shall, but I trust to You not to disappoint me. Cast me not off in the time of old age! Forsake me not when my strength fails me!”

117. Hold You me up—[See Sermon #1657, Volume 28—MY HOURLY PRAYER— Read/download the entire sermon, free of charge, at http://www.spurgeongems.org.] One is fond  
of that short, simple prayer. First it is, “Uphold me,” and then, “Hold me up.” Either way it is equally good—“Hold You me up”—

117. And I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto Your statutes continually. When God holds us up, there is no fear of our falling down! We have respect unto His statutes when He has respect unto us.

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. Perhaps some of you have seen the great heaps of slag lying outside the furnace. That is a picture of the ungodly—“You put away all the wicked of the earth like dross.”

119. Therefore I love Your testimonies. What? Does love to the Truth of God and to the God of Truth spring out of this putting away of the wicked? Yes, even the stern justice of God makes His people love Him and love His Truth! I am of the same mind as the children of Israel were when Pharaoh and his army were swallowed up in the Red Sea, and the emancipated slaves sang unto the Lord who had triumphed so gloriously. Some cannot do that because their sympathy is so entirely with the wicked, but the destruction of all that is evil creates a flow of joy in the heart of the true Believer! Still, it is a fearsome joy, full of holy awe and trembling!

120. My flesh trembles for fear of You; and I am afraid of Your judgments. Well may we also tremble when we see how terrible God is out of His holy places! There is a fear which is akin to love. As there is a fear which perfect love casts out, so is there another fear which love dandles on her knee—and such is the fear which David felt. May we, too, always have that holy awe of God in our hearts! Amen.

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
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OUR THOUGHTS ABOUT GOD’S THOUGHTS  
NO. 2609

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, FEBRUARY 12, 1899.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 1, 1883.

**“How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with You.”  
Psalm 139:17, 18.**

This Psalm dilates upon the Omniscience of God. In the most forcible manner, it shows that God’s eyes have always rested upon us and are resting upon us now. We are here made to see that God knew all about us before we were born, that He now reads our most secret thoughts and that our unspoken words are all known to Him. And I want you to notice that the Psalm is not at all in that mournful strain in which we sometimes speak of the Omniscience of God. It is a very solemn thing that God should be everywhere. “You God see me,” is a note of the most serious kind when sounded in the sinner’s ear, but, to those who are the people of God, there is nothing dreadful in the thought that God sees us. There is nothing to cause us to despond or to make us feel gloomy in the fact that God compasses our path and our lying down. In fact, in proportion as we are fully reconciled to God, love Him and rejoice in Him, it will become a cause of joy to reflect that our best Friend is never away from us—that our Protector’s hand is never removed, that the great observant eyes of Divine Love are never closed!

Oh, dear Friends, could we ever go to any place where God is not to be found, that would be the Hell of hells to His people! And if there could be a period in which the Lord did not look upon us, we might say, “Let that day be blotted out from the calendar.” It is a joy, a bliss, a foretaste of Heaven to know that—

*“Wherever we seek Him, He is found”*  
and even when we are not seeking Him, yet still He is above, beneath and all around us! He is never far from any of us. May we all have the Grace that will enable us to rejoice in a present God! We may judge as to our position before God by this test—is the thought of His constant observation of us a subject of joy or of dread? If we dread it, surely we have the old spirit of bondage still upon us! But if we rejoice in it, then we may know that we have received the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, “Abba, Father.”

I am going to try to speak, as God shall help me, first, upon God’s thoughts of us. “How precious also are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!” Then, secondly, I want to say a little upon our thoughts about God’s thoughts. His thoughts become precious to us as we think about them. Then, thirdly, I wish to speak at somewhat greater length concerning our thoughts upon God Himself. “When I awake, I am still with You.”

I. First, then, let us meditate for a little while upon GOD’S THOUGHTS OF US.  
That the infinite Jehovah thinks of us is absolutely certain. He thinks about all the inhabitants of the whole world. There is a general Providence which has a superintendence over all that happens in all parts of the earth. I know that the notion of some men is that the world is like a watch and that God has done with it as we do with our watches—that is, wound it up, put it under His pillow and gone to sleep. But it is not so, for in this great world-watch—to keep up the figure—God is present with every wheel and every cog of every wheel—there is no action in it apart from His present putting forth of power to make it move. There is nothing that happens merely as the result of, “law,” as some people seem to dream, for a law is nothing without a force at the back of it! When we speak of certain things as being governed by law, we simply mean that as far as we have discerned, that is the general way in which this particular thing moves, or is acted upon, or acts upon some other thing. But, then, where is the force that enables it to act so, or that makes it to be so acted upon? “That is gravitation,” says one. Yes, that is your name for that force, but it is really God who is everywhere at work! Though the law of gravitation may be said to be abiding, yet the force of gravity is but the force which proceeds from God. It is God still putting forth His power and operating after His own manner upon material substances.  
God, therefore, thinks upon the whole world—and I am glad that it is so! I do not like the idea of being put out to nurse, as it were, and left without my Heavenly Father’s personal supervision. I like to be in a world that is really God’s garden, a part of His own homestead in which He dwells and where I am always directly under the glance of His eyes. Rivers unknown to song, far distant from civilization, are nevertheless homely places to one who has learned to be at home with God.  
Now, as God thinks and must think of the whole material universe which He has created, much more does He think of men and most of all of us who are His own chosen people, to whom He stands in a very peculiar relationship as our Father, who has “begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” God must think of us—the blood would not flow in our veins, nor would the breath make our lungs to heave, nor would our various bodily processes go on without the perpetual exercise of His power. God must think of us especially in all the higher departments of our being, for they would speedily come to nothing apart from His constant care. There would be none of the spirit of prayer if He did not work it in us. There would be no spirit of sonship if the Holy Spirit did not teach us continually to cry, “Abba, Father.” Faith and hope and love are plants that only live in the sunlight of God. And if the great Father of Lights withdrew, all these would die. “Without Me you can do nothing,” is as certainly true of us who are His people, as of those who are far from Him by wicked worlds. We must be united to God, or else we shall perish and, therefore, as we know that we shall never perish, we are quite sure that our Heavenly Father thinks of us. Think of all the gracious influences that meet in your person to perpetuate your life—I mean, your

 spiritual life—your holiness, your comfort, your joy. Think of all the purposes of God that center in you in order that, by them, you may be made perfect and so be fit to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. Think of these things, I say, and you will at once see that for the grand design which God has concerning you, it is absolutely essential that He should think of you—and He does think of you!  
Next, God’s thoughts of us must be very numerous. According to our text the sum of them is very great—how great, the Psalmist does not say. The number of God’s thoughts is so vast that even if you could count the sand on the seashores, you could not count the thoughts of God concerning you! Oh, how important this makes us poor creatures, when we remember that God thinks of us! I would like you to sit still a minute and think over this wonderful Truth of God. You know that people are very proud if a king has merely looked at them. I have heard of a man who used to boast, all his life, that King George IV— such a beauty as he was!—once spoke to him. He only said, “Get out of the road,” but it was a king who said it, so the man felt greatly gratified thereby. But you and I, Beloved, can rejoice that God, before whom kings are as grasshoppers, actually thinks of us and thinks of us often. One or two thoughts would not suffice for our many needs—if He only thought of us now and then, what would we do in the meantime? But he thinks of us constantly! He says that He has engraved our names upon the palms of His hands, as if to show how continually we are before Him. David said, “I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon me.” And our Savior said to His disciples, “Your Father knows what things you have need of before you ask Him,” proving that He had thought about them and had looked upon them with careful eyes and observed all their necessities. Yes, God does in very deed and of a truth think upon His people—and His thoughts concerning them are very numerous!  
And they are also very tender. God never thinks of His people in a harsh way. He never has an unkind thought concerning even the most erring of those who are His own children. He looks upon them as a father looks upon his child, with intense affection, pitying them when they stray from Him. And if, sometimes, He chides them for their wrongdoing, even then He does but veil the purpose of His love that He may accomplish it the better. He is always aiming at that which will promote our best health, our truest wealth and our ultimate perfection. At times, clouds come between our souls and our God, but His love is always shining. O Beloved, if the Lord had not thought very tenderly of us, He would have cut some of us down long ago as cumberers to the ground. “He has not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.” How often He has screened us from trouble! How frequently He has prepared us for a trial, so that, when it came, it did not crush us! How often He has rescued us out of sore perils! How often He has visited us in the night and given us songs amid our sorrow! “Your gentleness has made me great,” said David, and many another child of God has said the same! There is nothing that can equal the tenderness of God towards us, His poor, frail and erring children.  
But while God’s thoughts concerning us have been thus tender, they have also been very wise. To make a glass that should reflect without any color the object placed before it, was long the desire of those who made certain kinds of optical instruments. They worked a long time to no purpose, but, at last, someone discovered how to form an achromatic lens and then, lo and behold, when this man had thought out his plan perfectly in all its details, he was able to make a glass which was exactly like the eyes of an insect which I have often seen. So, when the man thought aright, he thought just as God thought and, after going a long way round about, when he did come to the right conclusion, he came just where God was. And, in like manner, if you and I were to try to work out the problem of our lives, and if we were wise enough to discover the best way in which we could get to Heaven, we would come exactly to the route which God has marked out for us and we would do with ourselves precisely what God does with us! Were we always wise, we would never murmur. Were we to be endowed with infinite wisdom, we would rejoice in the very things which now distress us—and the clouds and darkness which we now seek to avoid, we would willingly pass through if we did but see, as God sees, the end as well as the beginning! His thoughts are wise for the whole of our lives. He does not simply think how He shall make us happiest today, or how He should give us the most enjoyment for a week—that is how fond and foolish mothers think and plan for their boys. They make ducks of them—and they grow up geese. They indulge them and spoil them, but it is never so with God in His thoughts concerning the happiness of His children. He looks far ahead. He takes eternity into the compass of His thoughts and He judges what is best to do for us, not merely under the aspect of an hour, or a week, or a month, or even of a whole life below, but He puts eternity into the scale and orders all things well for everlasting ages!  
You and I could not think like that, could we? We soon get puzzled with our little calculations and it is unwise for us to look too far ahead. If we begin considering 50 cares at once, they will prove to be too many for us. Our best way is to take them one by one and live by the day, or, better still, moment by moment. Such a course as that would not be wise for us if it were not that there is Another who, not living by the day, Himself, but filling all eternity, judges for us according to that blessed stanza of the Psalmist, “His mercy endures forever.”  
These, then, are the thoughts of God concerning us—certain, numerous, tender and infinitely wise.  
And God’s thoughts, too, are very practical. He does not think of us and let it end with thinking, but God’s thoughts are really His acts, for, with Him, to will is to do. He utters His thought and, lo, it is accomplished! His fiat has achieved it. God might have thought much of us and the thought would have had no comfort in it if it had not moved His hand to succor and to help us. Think awhile of the practical thoughts of God for us in the eternity when He chose us before the daystar knew its place. Think of the Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure, made before the sun had shed a single ray of light upon the earth. Think especially of that part of the Covenant in which the Father made His Son to be our Covenant Head and gave Him to stand in our place as our Surety and Substitute. Oh, what a thought was that—how wonderfully practical—that God should take His Beloved Son from His bosom and give Him up to die that we might live! And, ever since, all along our history, God has thought of us. He thought of us when we were babes and we were nourished and cherished. He thought of us when we were children and we learned to lisp His name. He thought of us—

*“When, in the slippery paths of youth,  
With heedless haste we ran.”*

He has thought of us since we have come to manhood. Yes, and in the case of many of us, He has thought of our children and of our children’s children, too. And He is still thinking of us and He will continue to do so when our last thoughts die out in insensibility. Remember His ancient promise to His people—“Even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry and will deliver you.” And we shall find it to be so! And each Believer may say, with David, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” These, then, are God’s thoughts concerning us— constant, kind, wise, tender, gracious, perfect, Divine—like He in whose infinite mind they are found!

II. Now let us meditate for just a few minutes upon OUR THOUGHTS ABOUT GOD’S THOUGHTS.  
What do you say, my Heart, to this wondrous Truth of God—that the Lord thinks upon you? I have been ready to say what would be a very fair translation of the Hebrew—“how rare are Your thoughts!” You know that the word, “rare,” was used in a different sense in olden times from what it is now. In Westminster Abbey there is s stone with these words upon it, “O rare Ben Jonson!”—meaning strange, special, peculiar, marked. So the thoughts of God are rare thoughts, the like of which cannot be found anywhere else! The thoughts of angels, or the thoughts of perfect spirits above must be something very wonderful, but, oh, the thoughts of God! If I were told that some bright angel was sent to think of me all day and all night long, that he was my Master’s servant to watch over me, I would feel pleasure in the thought, yet that would be a poor, poor thing compared with the fact that God thinks upon us and watches over us! The Lord told Moses that His angel would go before the people through the wilderness, but you may have noticed how Moses pleaded against such a decision—“If Your Presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.” We do not need angelic presence one hundredth as much as we need the Divine Presence! Here, then, in God’s thoughts concerning us, is something rare and wonderful, indeed! And this is our thought about it, that there is no other thought that can, for a moment, be compared with it!  
How delightful, too, it is to be thought upon by God! I have already said that to some people, the Truth that God is looking upon them wears an aspect of awe and dread. “Oh,” says one, “is it not terrible to think that God’s eyes are always upon me?” It is not terrible to me—I am right glad that it should be so, and I pray, with David, “‘Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.’ You will see much that will grieve You and much that You will have to amend, but still, I would not wish to hide anything from You, my Lord. Lies not all my hope, my very Heaven, that way? The glances of Your eyes, are they not the very medicine that shall cure my soul-sickness, or, at least, the means by which I shall get the medicine that will heal me of the dire disease of sin?”

It is even so, and the true child of God wishes to always get more and more closely under the inspection of his Heavenly Father—and the thoughts of God towards him charm and delight him. Does God in very deed think of me, from the moment when I wake in the morning, and all through the day, till I lock up my heart at night and give Him the key? Does He keep on thinking of me while I lie asleep, unable to think of anything except poor wandering thoughts that come in my dreams? If so, blessed be His name that He condescends to do anything of the kind! “How precious are Your thoughts unto me, O God!” How delightful is it to be thus thought of by You! And how consoling it is, also!  
We all like to be thought of and remembered. I went to call on one who was sorely sick. The doctor had said that he must see no one, but when his friends told him I was there, he exclaimed, “Oh, let him come up!” “No,” they replied, “he must not, for it might excite you, and do you harm.” “Give him my love, then,” he said, “and tell him that it does me good to know that he is downstairs.” We like to be thought of, I am sure that we do. Even the thoughts of a little child towards us have comfort in them. There is many a mother who is made a widow and she sits down to weep as if her heart must break. But when her little one plucks her skirt, ignorant of the sorrow which it will one day have to feel with the mother, and the mother hears the child’s merry little note, it is often the best form of consolation that God sends to her bereaved spirit!  
We all like to be kindly remembered, but, oh, what is it to be thought of by God? “When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.” And if men misrepresent us, and misinterpret us, and speak evil of us, and put us out of their company, what does it matter, as long as the Lord draws nearer to us than He did before? God’s servants in Scotland had brave times among the heather when they had to watch for Claverhouse’s dragoons and stood in jeopardy of their lives. The Lord was especially present among the lone crags and they heard His voice in the Psalm and then from above in the thunder! So near was the Lord to them in the dark days of persecution that afterwards, when peaceable times came and they could go to the kirk in quiet, there were some who looked with regret on those other days when they met at the peril of their lives and God was their Leader! So, God’s thoughts are precious to us by way of consolation.  
They also have other effects upon us, for the thoughts of God often move the souls of Christians, strengthening them in faith, awakening them to love and stirring them to zeal. There is many a man who has done, under a sense of God’s Presence, what he would never have dreamed of doing if he had not realized that the Lord was there. As the Highland chieftain, when he fell and was dying, said to the men of his clan, “I shall watch you, my children, as you rush to the fight,” and so made them brave—when we think of God’s watching us and of His eyes being upon us, we also become valiant and do exploits in His sight! And each one of us sings—  
*“I can do all things, or can bear  
All sufferings, if my Lord is there!  
Sweet pleasures mingle with the pains,  
While His left hand my head sustains.”*  
His Presence is all that our heart requires. Indeed, Beloved, when we really drink in the thoughts of God towards us, our spirit is filled with all that it needs and is borne onward as with a mighty rush—a full tide of Grace—up to the Throne of Heaven!  
III. Now I come to the last part of my discourse, OUR THOUGHTS UPON GOD HIMSELF. David says, here, “When I awake, I am still with You.”  
I want you to notice, first, that he seems to imply that our thoughts bring us near to God. Thinking of Him, we realize that we are in His immediate Presence. I cannot describe the feeling of a spirit consciously present with God, but, though I cannot describe it, I am sure that many of you know what it is, and I am equally sure that I, also, know what it is. There have been times with us when we did not actually walk by sight but, still, we had a very joyful experience of God’s Presence with us. We not only believed in God’s existence, but our spirits seemed enveloped in and encompassed with His Spirit and appeared to be, as it were, set on fire, as when the bush in the desert was all aglow with the indwelling God. It is not always so with us, but we have had times of extremely conscious nearness to God. After prayer, as we rose from our knees and looked at the clock, we perceived that a full half-hour had gone, whereas we thought that it was only a minute or two that we had been at our devotions. In our chamber, alone, as we have read the Word, the sacred page has seemed to glow with unusual brilliance. We do not remember noticing such glory in those words, before, but God has spoken to us through the Word and that has made the difference.  
Sometimes, as we have been sitting in the sanctuary, a solemn awe has manifestly been on every heart. And when we went away, we said to one another, “Surely God was in that place, and we knew it.” You know how Paul says about his rapturous experience, “Whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knows.” Such things have happened to many of God’s people and I believe that the more we live in Him, and walk with Him, the more often will this be our experience till it may even come to be perpetual, and our soul shall be as certain of the Presence of God as we are of the presence of our body. We shall get to have as keen a sense and recognition of the Presence of God with us as we have of the atmosphere which surrounds us. David’s declaration, “When I awake, I am still with You,” implies that holy thoughts of the precious thoughts of God place us near to God!  
And, next, it implies that these thoughts help to keep us near to God. “When I awake, I am still with You,” said David, as if he meant, “I have a long time been in Your company. I have been now by the week, the month, the year, abiding in the light of Your Countenance, enjoying Your sweet society. Your Grace has kept me near You.”  
Still further, such thoughts help to restore God’s Presence to us if, for a while, we have lost it. “When I awake”—that means, “I have been asleep and so have lost the consciousness of God’s Presence.” Have you ever known what it is, at night, to be quite sorry to go to sleep because you have been so full of holy joy that you were afraid you might lose it while you were unconscious? Have you never lain awake thinking and meditating upon your God, enjoying His Presence so much that you have said, “This is better than sleep. I wish that my eyes might be kept wide awake that they might forget their need of rest, that I might continue this hallowed communion”? But with our poor frail frames we must sleep, so, is it not sweet that when you awake, you should be where you left off, that, as your soul was holding fellowship with God as you fell asleep, when you opened your eyes, again, He was still there? You were ready to take up the happy employment where you left off, for you had not broken the thread—and you went on still communing with your God!  
This text evidently refers in part to natural slumber. When our thoughts are much with God, then it will happen that our sleep will make no break in our communion with Him. Were you ever pained by a dream? I will hold no man responsible for his dreams, but, if there were no sin in us, we would have no sin even in our dreams. If we were perfectly pure—as some think that they are—we would be perfectly pure even in our dreams. Take off the bridles from the horses, remove the bits from their mouths and let them go where they will, yet, if they are thoroughly trained, they will not rush wildly about and they will still obey your call. If a house is perfectly clean, it will be just as clean if you take all the locks off and leave the doors open. If a man is perfectly pure, he would be pure in any case and in any condition. Therefore, even a dream may sometimes set us watching to know how such mischief could get into our thoughts. It could not have come there if sin had not been dwelling in us. But, oh, it is blessed to get so near to God that when you fall asleep, you seem to hear, even in your dreams, the music of His voice! And when you wake in the morning, you will wish to recall those blessed thoughts that came to you even when your whole being seemed steeped in sleep! The text says, “When I awake, I am still with You.” And I think that it also means, “When I wake up from any temporary lethargy into which I may have fallen, I am still with You.” We all, sometimes, get into that state—sleeping, though our heart is awake. We wish to be more brisk, more lively—but we cannot stir ourselves up. We sing— *“Dear Lord! And shall we always lie  
At this poor dying rate?”*

We have fallen into a kind of stupor. What a blessing it is to be awakened out of it, possibly by a severe affliction, perhaps by an earnest discourse! Then the awakened one says, “Now I have come back to You, my God. There was a something within me that could not forget You, even for a while, though it lay still and dormant.”

And, best of all, what a grand thing it will be, one of these days, to go upstairs for the last time and stretch ourselves on the bed and say, “Adieu! Adieu!” to all we love below—and then put our head back on the pillow while those who are watching say, “He sleeps in Jesus!” “I shall be satisfied when I awake with Your likeness.” “‘When I awake, I am still with You.’ I trusted You when I fell asleep and in the morning I awoke to find You still my Friend.”

Then, when my body wastes from its long sleep in the tomb, every rising bone of it shall acknowledge the Lord! My eyes shall see Him in that day—the God that loved me and died for me! Oh, how blessed it is to keep the whole heart so fixed upon God that come sleep, come life, come death, come what may, we shall be just like the needle in the compass which always turns to the pole! You may turn it around, if you like, but it always goes back and will not point anywhere but in that one direction. May it also be true of you and me that we can rest nowhere but in our God! I close my discourse, as I have often done before, with that sweet verse—

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

I wish that all of you knew this blessed experience of which I have been speaking. Some of you do not. You are afraid of God. You are afraid of His seeing you. You are afraid to go to Him. See, then, here is Jesus Christ who took upon Him our nature though He is God! Go to Him, trust Him, believe in Him—then He will make you to be a child of God and you will not be afraid of your Father. God bless you, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON:  
**PSALM 139.**

May the all-seeing God, of whom this Psalm speaks, look down upon us and bless us richly while we read it!  
Verse 1. O LORD You have searched me, and known me. “Known me perfectly, far better than I know myself. You have made an inquisition and investigated every secret thing concerning me. ‘You have searched me, and known me.’”  
2. You know my sitting down and my rising up, You understand my thoughts afar off. “Before I think it, while as yet it is not actually my thought, while it is still unformed and far away, You understand it. You not only know what it is, but You understand it—the motive from which it springs, the state of mind out of which it arises, and whereunto it tends—‘You understand my thought afar off’”  
3. You compass my path. “You are all round me—behind, before, above, beneath”—  
*“Awake, asleep, at home, abroad,  
I am surrounded still with God.”*

3. And my lying down. “When wearied by my journey I lie down to rest, You still bless my lying down.”  
3. And are acquainted with all my ways. “I cannot tell you anything which You do not know; nor can I hide anything from You. Whatever I have done, or am doing, or shall do, ‘You are acquainted with all my ways.’”  
4. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, You know it altogether—

*“He knows the words I mean to speak,*

*Ere from my opening lips they break.”*  
God sees the word that is lying quietly on the tongue as well as the word which has been uttered by the tongue. “You know it altogether.” God’s knowledge is not partial or imperfect. He never misjudges any, for He is acquainted with every part of every man.

5. You have beset me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me. “You have come so near me that You touch me. You not only know my thoughts and my words, but You come into contact with me. You know me as I know a thing when I feel it with my hand—‘You have laid Your hand upon me.’”

6, 7. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Where shall I go from Your Spirit? Not that David desired to go away from God, but he wished to show the impossibility of escaping from the eyes of God. “Where shall I go from Your Spirit?”

7. Or Where shall I flee from Your Presence? “You are everywhere and Your far-seeing eyes will behold me in every place. Vain is it, therefore, for me to think that I can ever flee from Your Presence.” Is it not a very striking thought that every sin is committed in the Presence of God? He must be a very bold rebel who would insult his monarch to his face! Men are generally on their best behavior when they stand upon the palace floor—yet the whole earth is but the habitation of the great King eternal, immortal, invisible—and every time we sin, we sin in His very Presence, and with His eyes resting upon us.

8-10. If I ascend up into Heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in Hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Your hand lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me. Well did Dr. Watts write—

*“If mounted on a morning ray  
I fly beyond the western sea,  
Your swifter hand would first arrive,  
And there arrest your fugitive.”*

There is no hope of escaping from God by any speed to which we may attain, for if we could fly with the speed of light, yet would Jehovah be before us—His hand would lead as, and His right hand would hold us.

11. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. It shall be light to the eyes of God, for He depends not upon the light in order that He may see. Light is a most welcome aid to our poor eyes, but God sees just as well in the dark! “Even the night shall be light about me.”

12. Yes, the darkness hides not from You; but the night shines as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to You. This is a very commonplace Truth of God and yet how seldom do men realize it! They still fancy that when the night comes on and they are not perceived by mortal eyes, they may do what they will. But there is no curtain in the night that can hide a deed of guilt from the eyes of the Omniscient Jehovah! “The darkness and the light are both alike to You.”—

*“Almighty God, Your piercing eyes  
Strike through the shades of night  
And our most secret actions lie  
All open to Your sight.”*

13. For You have possessed my reins. “The innermost parts of my being—You have possessed them as Your own. You know as much about them as a man knows of the rooms in his own house. ‘You have possessed my reins.’”

13, 14. You have covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise You. That is a very sweet thing for the Psalmist to say. Just when he felt stricken with awe by reason of this august attribute of the Omniscience of Jehovah, he looks up to his God and says, “I will praise You.”

14. For I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Anyone who understands anatomy will tell you that man is strangely formed. So fearfully are we made that our life stands in constant jeopardy—it looks as if every breath might be our last and every pulse might speedily end our life. You cannot examine a blood vessel—especially some of the very small one through a microscope without being utterly astonished. Any medical man will tell you that there are many times in an hour—perhaps even in a minute—in which a very simple thing would put our life in imminent peril of destruction! Truly we are “fearfully and wonderfully made.”—

*“Our life contains a thousand springs,  
And dies if one is gone!  
Strange, that a harp of thousand strings Should stay in tune so long!”*

Every man is a world of wonders. He need not go abroad for miracles, for he is, himself, a marvelous and miraculous combination!

14. Marvelous are Your works; and that my soul knows right well. How there can be a compound of spirit and matter—how the earth on which we tread should enter into our composition and yet we should be akin to angels. How there can be something about us that links us with the dust, yet much about us that joins us to God, Himself—these are extraordinary things which we do not understand Where is the point in which the spirit touches materialism? How is it that the will can move the hand or the finger? How does spirit act on matter? Those are questions much more easily asked than answered.

15. My substance was not hid from You, when I was made in secret, and curiously made. Embroidered, as it were, with a needle. So extraordinary is the body of man that it may be compared to the needlework of God—“curiously made.”

15, 16. In the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect. And in Your book all my members mere written. Just as an architect sketches his plan for a building and specifies so much of this and that, so the Psalmist represents God as writing down in a book all the members of our body.

16. Which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. God mapped out what He intended that we should be even when as yet we were not in existence! And from our earliest days He cared for us. If we look back upon our infancy—that considerable period of life in which we were utterly helpless and could do nothing whatever for ourselves—it ought to check our unbelief, because, if God took charge of us, then, and found means for our protection and our growing up when we were but little babes, if we should live to a second infancy, we may fairly trust that God will take care of us again! And if we should ever, through sickness, be reduced to such a helpless state that we can do nothing for ourselves, yet He that cared for us before we saw the Light of God, and when we saw it with feeble trembling eyes, will take care of us still!

17-19. How precious, also, are Your thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with You. Surely You will slay the wicked, O God. It must be so! God cannot let sinners continue to live and provoke Him to His face. He must, one day, take down the sword of Justice, unsheathe it, and slay the foes of righteousness! “Surely You will slay the wicked, O God.”

19. Depart from me, therefore, you bloody men. “Get away, lest, when He comes to kill you, I should have to see you die.”  
20-22. For they speak against You wickedly, and Your enemies take Your name in vain. Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate You? And am not I grieved with those that rise up against You? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them my enemies. We are to love our own enemies, but we are not to love God’s enemies! We are to forgive our personal enemies, but we cannot forgive God’s enemies! That man loves not the Truth of God who does not hate a lie and he loves not the right who has no anger against wrong. We are living in an age in which we are practically told that truth and error are the same, that the devil’s lie and the Divine Revelation may lie down together! If we will not endorse this lie, men call us bigoted or dogmatic. Bless the Lord, we mean to be a great deal more dogmatic than we have been, and to stick even closer to the Truth of God than we have up to now done, if that is possible!  
23, 24. Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in Your way everlasting. That is a blessed prayer! May God hear it in the case of each one of us, for His dear Son’s sake! Amen.

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—230, 229, 194.  
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THE WAY EVERLASTING  
NO. 903

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.  
“Lead me in the way everlasting.”  
Psalm 139:24.

WE must all of us have a “way.” We must be journeying, for this is not our resting place. We cannot abide in any one stay. “Forward” is the word of command. As the round earth never pauses but perpetually revolves. As the stars never halt in their course but traverse incessantly their ordained orbits. As the rivers evermore seek the sea—as the ocean waves unrestingly pursue each other—even so feel we the common motion and always must we move onward, onward through this life unto the next— onward forever and ever.

Since we must have a way, it is of the highest importance that our way should be a right one. Important, because if it is not right we shall not long be happy in our course since the happiness of those who follow the path of evil is fleeting as a meteor, mocking as a will-o’-the-wisp, deceptive as the mirage, frail as a bubble on the wave and unsubstantial as a phantom of the night. Today the path of sin leads us through flowery meads and groves resounding with song of birds, but tomorrow it will wind among the desolations of many generations where souls and all their joys are withered as the green herb in the summer sun. The ways of righteousness are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace. The good is growing and the pleasure deepening where the wise in heart are walking, but nowhere else. We have need, then, to find the right way, that we may be happy pilgrims along it.

We have need of the right way, also, because whatever the way we pursue, others will be affected by it. Little ones who gather around our knees will think, “father’s way” must be the way for them. Servants, neighbors, brothers, sisters and if we are very young, playmates and school fellows under our influence—any or all of these will be affected for good or evil by our choices. Our following the wrong way will lead them to the wrong and we shall become a ministry of evil unto them if we choose evil unto ourselves. More important, still, is it that we should choose the right way because of the right end. “All’s well that ends well.” But what if the way is such that it must end amiss—must lead to the blackness of darkness forever—must land us “where their worm dies not and their fire is not quenched”? Oh, then it will be terrible to have been found in such a way! Terrible for our souls to meet such a doom!

May it be yours, my dear Hearers, to be led early in life through the gate of faith in Jesus which leads into the straight and narrow way of eternal life! May it be yours to be kept in that way, your faith confirmed by following in it. May it be yours to be found in that way when the summons shall come from the Master to render up your account. May it be yours to win, through Divine Grace, the sure results of perseverance in the way of holiness by reaching that blessed end that has no end—the joy of the blessed in the land of the hereafter at the right hand of the Most High!

We shall take the text as a prayer and point out to you three things in it which strike us as being somewhat remarkable. The first is a remarkable attribute of the right way—it is said to be “everlasting.” Secondly, a remarkable confession implied in the language here employed. And then, thirdly, the remarkably comprehensive prayer contained in the words before us.

I. First, then, A REMARKABLE ATTRIBUTE OF THE RIGHT WAY—IT IS “THE WAY EVERLASTING.” It is most certain that the way of many men cannot be everlasting. The way of the sinful is not so. I hope, with regard to some, that their way will last but for a very little time, for it is the way of evil. May they soon turn from it! “It is a long lane that has no turning.” May their road be so hedged up by God’s Providence and Grace that they may be compelled to take another road. May their prayer be unto God, “turn me and I shall be turned.” The way of the sinner ought not to be a way everlasting, for if it should be, it must be a way of everlasting sorrow. The sinner’s way of pleasure is far from being everlasting, for even here the wine cup of sin first yields the sweetness of intoxication, but afterwards it becomes insipid with satiety. And after that it grows bitter with remorse, and as for the dregs, what a Hell burns within them!

The way of pleasure in sin is but as the way of foam on the breaker, soon to disappear. The devil would gladly persuade men that their life shall always be as it is, that they shall dance on forever—forever as the merry butterflies that need not toil and that flit away the golden hours. He would have them forget the killing frosts that will blight forever each idle wing. Death and the Justice of God have decreed that the way of pleasure and the life of sin shall not be everlasting. An end must surely come to the houses of cards built on carnal merriment—their bowing walls must lie level with the dust—their tottering fences must fall down to the ground.

The way of the merely moral man is not a way everlasting. It may be that he is one who steadily pursues money, conducting his business on the best principles, commanding the fullest confidence of the mercantile community and the admiration of all who can appreciate tact and principle. The man may manage to acquire wealth, it may grow from day to day—his account may be large at the bank, his capital may be ample and the stream of interest that flows in may, every day, be more considerable. But this cannot always last. There may come disaster and loss and that which was long in accumulation may very swiftly be swept away. At any rate, death will put an end to the filling of the money bags. Like Jesus in the Temple, Death will enter and overturn the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of them that sell doves—and with a voice of authority he will cry, “Take these things out!”

Men will find that they cannot barter and bargain, that they cannot accumulate and grow rich when the time has come to lay aside their mortal bodies and face the Judge of all the earth! These things of time, however dear to them, those who are summoned to the land of spirits must leave. Bitter the parting, but it is inevitable. Naked came they forth and naked must they return—let them have gained what they may. It may be that the man, instead of making money, finds it difficult to make ends meet and his way is that of plodding hard and industriously to rear a family as respectably as he can. This has in it much to be commended, but even then, unsanctified by nobler ends, it is not a way everlasting, for there is a land where they neither marry nor are given in marriage and where, consequently, there shall be no wife nor children for whom to toil and no avocation for the worker who lived by bread alone.

There will be no sphere for the mere servant of men or master of men to occupy in Heaven. The mere earth-server will be out of place—his way must come to an end. The arm must be paralyzed that earned the bread and the fingers that drove the pen or wielded the needle must rest in long repose. And when they are reanimated at the Resurrection they cannot pursue their old toil. If they know nothing but the handicraft of earth, their way will have a wretched end. The way of the merely moral is not a way everlasting. It might be if it were consecrated by the Grace of God. These more common things might be the prelude to the everlasting service before the Throne of God, but inasmuch as the life is unconsecrated, let it be spent as it may—the way is a way that comes to an end.

The way of the purposeless and dabbler is not everlasting. How many a man’s life reminds you, instead of an everlasting way, of a mere cul-desac—a blind alley, as we say—down which you wander merely to come back again! Hundreds of men’s lives are like that—like the famous king in the nursery rhyme who led his troops up a hill and then down again. They live and they die and that is all that you can say of many. Their way is a vain show—it passes and is gone and we say, “Where is it?” Some remind me of those circular lanes which we have sometimes been lost in—you go round and you come hack to the same place again and you are no more forward. As the tramp of the blind horse going round the mill, such is the way of many—from morn till eve, from year to year—they are mere pendulums swinging to and fro. Their life would be, if they could exist forever, an everlasting toil. But since they must die, it must come to an end, and their unhappy spirits must remain forever in that pathless wilderness of woe from which no traveler ever finds his way of escape.

My Brothers and Sisters, let me remind you, also, that the way, even of some religious people, is not the way everlasting. I mean the path, for instance, of those who are hypocritical. They may put on the mask and look like beauty, itself, but death will rudely dash the visor on one side and let their face be seen. Like the veiled prophet, who wore over his leprous brow a mask of silver, such are many men. They may pass in the crowd as bright and beautiful, but when the time comes for them to be seen in the light of God, their loathsomeness will be discovered. The way of the Pharisee, again—who differs somewhat from the hypocrite—is not the way everlasting. He will not always dare to say, “God, I thank You that I am not as other men.” Not always will he be able to boast, “I fast twice in the week. I pay tithes of all that I possess.” The time will come when he will see all this outside washing of the platter to have been of no service, because his inward part was full of very wickedness. What will be his dismay and despair!

No, Brethren, neither the way of the hypocrite, the formalist, nor the Pharisee, is the way everlasting. Neither is any way but that which is according to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Do not tell me that if you are sincere it will little matter which way you take! You know better! If you sincerely believe that you are going to St. Paul’s, or to London Bridge, when you leave this Tabernacle and you turn to the right, you will probably find yourselves at Clapham or at Tooting, but not at St. Paul’s or London Bridge, with all your sincerity of misbelief. The sincere belief that you will be saved by your good works will by no means avert your damnation if you persist in refusing to trust in Jesus Christ. Faith in Jesus is the

 only way of salvation and if you will not walk in that way, there is no other.

Our Lord’s teaching leaves us no room to hope for the salvation of unbelievers. “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.” But what of those who do not believe? May they not be sincerely mistaken? May they not be very good people, after all, and be saved in their own way? Our Lord’s reply is sharp, clear and decisive, “He that believes not shall be damned.” He has nothing else for them but that! Christ is too great and too honest to court popularity, as many do nowadays, by an affectation that right or wrong are much the same. The wicked charity of this age sickens us with its deceptive cant, as it whines out, “It will little matter what you believe. Nothing, nowadays, is of very great consequence. Believe what you like and it shall be all right in the long run.” No, but according to the Gospel of Jesus you must believe the Truth of God and have faith in the power of the Truth, for a lie will not regenerate you! A lie will not fit you to see the face of God. A lie will not conduct you to Heaven, but only that Truth which has the stamp and seal of God and of His Holy Spirit.

I have thus shown you that there are many ways which are not everlasting. Let us now notice that the right way—the way of faith in God and of a life that flows out of faith in God—the way, indeed, which Jesus trod, the way which we tread when we follow in Jesus’ footsteps—is the way everlasting, because it is a way which was mapped out upon everlasting principles. The Truth of God will never die. The stars will grow dim. The sun will pale his glory, but the Truth of God will be forever young. Integrity, uprightness, honesty, love, goodness—these are all imperishable. No grave can ever entomb these immortal principles. They have been in prison, but they have been freer than before. Those who have enshrined them in their hearts have been burned at the stake, but out of their ashes other witnesses have arisen. No sea can drown, no storm can wreck, no abyss can swallow up the ever living Truth of God!

You cannot kill goodness and truth and integrity and faith and holiness! The way that is consistent with these must be a way everlasting. Holiness is a way everlasting, because it is pursued by the possessors of a life that is everlasting. No man enters the way of truth, righteousness, faith, love to God and love to his neighbor but the man who has received the new birth. Now, the product of the new birth is not like the fruit of the flesh which is mortal and perishable—it is a living and incorruptible seed that lives and abides forever, so that the man who is born again can no more die than God Himself! He has received the life of Christ within him, and, according to the Scriptures, because Christ lives he shall live also. It is an everlasting way, then, because the pilgrims who tread it, though they are mortals to all appearance, are yet, in the sight of God, immortal! They bear within them a life unquenchable, whose endurance shall be coexistent with the life of Jehovah Himself.

Godliness is a way everlasting, because no circumstances can by any possibility necessitate any change in it. The man who lives by policy is like a sailor on a gusty day, or who has a foul wind against him and must tack about to reach first this point, and then the other, and makes but slow progress, after all, in the direction which he really wishes to pursue. But the man who has the life of God and follows the way of the Truth of God is like the steamship which plows its road straight on, wind or tide notwithstanding. Why needs it to tack? It bears its force within itself and is not dependent upon the extraneous circumstances of winds and waves! Happy is that man who is in this condition! If he is poor, he may cheerfully pursue the way of Truth and find his poverty a blessing! If he is rich, the same immortal principles which guided him in poverty will suffice him now that he has come to the possession of wealth.

If he were elected to a kingdom, such a man, having the Law of God in his heart, would know how to walk and to behave himself right royally. His way is everlasting because he has not to stop every morning and enquire, “How am I to behave today? What is the new rule by which I shall shape my course?” Your tricky politicians, who this day are one thing and that the other, as they fancy the public mind may change—these had need to consult their barometer to know what kind of weather the popular will ordains. But we, if we are taught of God to do the right thing, care not about the weather or the will of man. Whether it is fair or foul—whether the sun shines or not—we would still serve our God and do the right, by His Grace, and if the heavens should fall, expect to still find a shelter.

Righteousness is the way everlasting, because such a way, even death, itself, shall not terminate. The man who learns to live as God would have him live, will find death to be only a circumstance in his immortality. He will pass onward, with no more pause than the earth makes when the moon comes between her and the sun. As when the iron horse pursues his rapid way, he shoots through a tunnel and is out of it again, making the darkness but an interlude in his progress—even so is death a small matter to the converted and regenerate man! The man who walks in the way of God passes through death as through a temporary gloom, but he still pursues the even tenor of his way. What he did on earth he shall do in Heaven, only he shall do it better and after a nobler sort!

On earth he loved his God. In Heaven he shall do the same. On earth he found his joy in a sight of Christ—in Heaven he shall enjoy that sight more near and unveiled! On earth he loved the true and the right and the good—and in Heaven he shall dwell in the midst of the city that is of pure gold and whose light is brighter than the sun, where only holiness and perfection are admitted. He shall not even change his company, for the Church militant in which he fought on earth is also the Church triumphant with which he shall reign forever and ever in Heaven! You see, then, that the godly man’s path is a way everlasting. I might have said much more, but this shall suffice.

II. Dear Brothers and Sisters, the next remarkable thing in the text is THE CONFESSION WHICH IS MADE. David says, “Lead me in the way everlasting.” David was a good man, a Grace-taught man, a spiritual man, an eminently spiritual man and yet he required to be led in the way— “Lead me in the way everlasting.” What is more, David was a deeply experienced man. This Psalm is towards the end of the book and I suppose his hair was all gray when he wrote it. He had come to threescore years and ten, probably, and there he is, dear man, able to teach others, yet pleading, “Lead me, lead me.”

He was a ripe Believer, for he had not only the years of age, but the experience of a much-tried life. In fact, David seems to have been an epitome of all men. You never had a trouble but what you could find something to suit you under it in the Psalms. And I think you never had a joy but what you discovered a verse that would help you to sing out your joy. David, somehow or other, seems to have known all the ups and downs, all the hills and all the valleys of Christian experience and yet for all that he cries, “Lead me, lead me.” David was the man after God’s own heart, despite his slips. His sin was the soldier’s common sin—we must remember that. His position was an extraordinary one, such as ours can never be. He was a man after God’s heart because of his deep sincerity, his childlikeness and his warmth of soul. And yet notwithstanding that and all his eminence in Divine Grace, he says, “Lead me, lead me.”

What does this prayer teach us? Why, that the most mature Christian, if he judges aright, feels that he needs as much to be led in the right way as if he were only beginning the spiritual life! The words seems to me to be almost humiliating, “Lead me.” It is a little child saying, “Lead me, Mother, lead me.” It is more than that—it is a blind man putting out his hands, he cannot see, he cannot find his way and he is begging—“Lead me.” Such babes are we. Such blind men are we, apart from the guiding Grace of God! Oh, how dependent we are, then, and what confessions ought we to make who are so much less than David, so much younger, the most of us, so much less experienced than he! How ought we to pray emphatically, “Lead me, Lord, for I am so little, so uninstructed and have had such little experience. Lead me in the way everlasting.”

This remarkable confession and prayer should suggest two things— ignorance and impotence. When we say, “Lead me,” if it is a blind man, it means ignorance—he cannot see the way and therefore he needs to be led, though he may be strong enough to walk if he only knew the way. “Lead me, Lord,” also signifies impotence if it is judged of as the child’s case—he needs to be led in another sense because he has not strength enough in his little feet to go without the help of his mother’s hand. “Lead me in the way.” So, you see, our confession should be double—of our ignorance and of our impotence—of our need of knowledge and of our lack of strength.

1. First, our need of knowledge. “‘Lead me in the way everlasting,’ for I do not know that way everlasting. Naturally I know nothing of it, nor can I, as a natural man, until You teach me—for only the spiritual man receives spiritual things and the carnal mind cannot know the things of God, for they are spiritual and must be spiritually discerned. O God, how dangerous is my case and how hopeless, too, unless You teach me! I pray You, therefore, instruct me! Enlighten me. Lead me in the way everlasting! O Lord, I may well confess that I need this instruction because even though I am converted and so know something of Your way, yet it often happens that I know not which is the right way through defect of judgment.

“If willing to do the right, yet it may sometimes happen that I may put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter. Though anxious and even desirous to take the right road, yet I may come to a place where two ways meet which seem, both of them, to be the right one and I may not know which way to choose. My judgment, Lord, is very imperfect and apt to err. Lead me, I pray You. He that leans to his own judgment is foolish and he that trusts to his own heart is a fool—neither to my judgment nor to my heart would I trust, but say, ‘Lord, lead me.’” Moreover, in addition to a deficient judgment we ought to confess, and I hope we shall humbly do so, that we are apt to be misled by

 vitiated affections. There is a leaning in us all towards the evil way if we dare pursue it! Ah, how soon we touch the forbidden fruit! How does the heart run after vanity, even when we have resolved by Divine Grace that we will always close our eyes to it!

That man must have well listed his door who can keep out Satan’s temptations. But he who should have done that and left no crack by which the old serpent could enter would find a serpent within the core of his own heart, in his own corruptions. “Alas, then, O God, since my soul leans towards evil and will go amiss if it can, lead You me, lest my depraved affections should further pervert my judgment and I should leave the King’s highway.” In addition to this, all over this world there are influences which would make us take the wrong way, deceiving us into the notion that we are right. The air is not clear anywhere—there are mists and fog all around—the best of men often have to pause and feel the hot sweat upon their brow through trembling anxiety as to the right course. Which is right? Which is wrong?

This fog of custom—everybody does it! This fog of tradition—everybody has done it these hundreds of years! The dread of being singular, the dislike of being thought to be precise and I know not what beside—all these cast a mist about us. Oh, how easy it is when we are traveling through a thick and murky atmosphere for us to mistake the way! Lead us, then, Lord! Lead us in the way everlasting! Alas, how many have set out, as they thought, under God’s guidance on the voyage of life, but they have not really received Christ nor His life within them? And so, being deluded by the false lights of wreckers, have soon come to everlasting shipwreck, believing all the while that they were sailing into the celestial haven!

Dear Brothers and Sisters, judge not yourselves to be wise, or the Word will judge you to be foolish! But go, now, with a confession of your ignorance unto God in silent prayer and lift up this petition, “Guide me, O You great Jehovah! I am a pilgrim through this misty land. I am foolish, You are wise—guide me with Your powerful hand, conduct me safely, let no enemy tempt me from the narrow way, but lead me in the way everlasting.”

2. But, secondly, the confession also contains an admission of lack of strength, for it is not merely, “Show me,” which would suffice if the man were strong, but, “Lead me,” which, as I have said before, is as the child that needs its mother’s finger, or its father’s supporting hand. We not only need knowledge, but we need power to run in the right way. Morally and physically men can do right if they will. “It is as easy,” says one, “for a man not to get drunk as it is to open his hand.” And that is a fact, for if a man, when he holds the intoxicating glass, would only open his hand the liquor would fall to the ground and the drink would not make a beast of him.

So any other sin may easily be avoided, so far as the moral and physical power are concerned. But then there is a lack of will in the man, and that is the point—and therefore we need to ask of God to give us will, which is the real power. Oh, how irresolute a man often is concerning a sin which he knows to be a sin, but which enchants him with its sweetness! Ah, how a man will say, “I must give it up, but I cannot!” How, like the serpent in the old story of Laocoon, Sin will twist itself round and round a man and if he tugs and pulls away one coil, yet there is another and another and another! Ah, how men dally with sin! When it comes to plucking off the right arm and plucking out the right eye, you say to yourselves, “We do not like losing this arm, and besides, we have not yet found the proper knife to take it off with.”

Ah, if you had the proper knife, yet you would be slow to make the gash! You would plead that it might be spared at least a little longer—that a little good work might yet be done with it! There will always be some excuse for delay in giving up sin and if the surgeon does not interpose and take it off, the mortification of sin will spread through the entire body before the man will be willing to lose his limb. Sin dies hard. It makes a hundred excuses for itself and pleads, “Is it not a little one? Is it not a sweet one?”

O Lord, then, give me strength of resolution, and when I know that a thing is wrong, help me to have done with it! And when I perceive an action to be right, help me to make haste and delay not to keep Your Commandments. O my Lord, may I never try to patch up a peace between my conscience and myself by trimming and compromising. If I know a thing to be Your will, may I never parley nor question—for that is to rebel. The spirit that parleys is the essence of high treason. May I put away all questioning and, obedient to You, at once yield my will to be Yours. Lead me, Lord, lead me! Uphold me with Your hand of Grace and give me strength and resolution to be holy!

There are some who have strength and resolution enough by fits and starts, but they have not stability enough to persevere. If Heaven could be won by one great leap, how soon they would have it! But if to enter into the pearly gates one must go on pilgrimage all the way, then they cannot hold out to the end. Lord, lead me! How speedily do I begin to shrink! How soon would my rebellious heart draw back from Your service! O give me persevering Grace and when I would stand aside, lead me forward! Draw, draw me, good Lord! Yes, gently tug at my laggard soul and when—

*“My heart can neither fly nor go  
To reach celestial joys,”*

Then—  
*“Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly dove,  
With all Your power Divine.  
Come, shed abroad a Savior’s love,  
And that shall kindle mine.”*

Lead me, Lord! You see what is meant by the prayer and I need not go further, though there is much room for enlargement. Need of knowledge and lack of strength are both confessed in this remarkable verse.

III. Let us close by noticing THE REMARKABLY COMPREHENSIVE PRAYER before us. I do not know many of the collects or particularly wish to know them, but I will give you my text for a collect and you shall never find its superior. Let this be your constant prayer—you may use it as long as you like and as often as you please, for if it is sincere, it will never be a vain repetition—“Lead me in the way everlasting.”

1. Now, notice this prayer very carefully. First, observe how comprehensive it is, because of its object. Its object is the whole man. “Lead me— not half of me, not part of me. Lead me in the whole way—not in some part of the way, but in the whole way, that is to say, let my thoughts be led in the way that I may not think unrighteously, that I may not believe the Truth of God in part, but that I may be sound in the faith. Lead me that I may not believe false doctrine. Lord, lead my understanding and my intellect in the way of Revelation—make me to know Your Covenant Truths and the great Doctrines of Grace. Let me not be satisfied to know half Your Truth and think I know it all, but lead me into all Your Truth. Let there not be one doctrine that I would erase, nor one precept that I would forget, nor one single word in Your Book that I would blot out. Lord, lead me as to my understanding, knowledge and thoughts—lead me in the way everlasting.”

He means his emotions, too, as well as his intellectual part. “Lord, lead me in Your way, for well I know that if my head should go without my heart, yet were I all undone. Lord, help me to love not the world nor the things that are of the world, but lead me in the way everlasting. Let my best passions boil when Christ is the fire. Let my heart be in its best trim when Christ has come to see it, like a garden that is watered by His Presence and whose fruits are ripened by the sunlight of His love.” He refers his tongue to the same leading. “Lord, grant that my tongue may not be a slanderous tongue, or a trifling tongue, or a lascivious tongue, or a tongue that talks for mere talk’s sake. But, Lord, salt my tongue for me. Grant me Grace so to speak that my conversation shall edify the hearer. Lead me in the way everlasting.”

He means, indeed, himself as to his actions. “I would keep Your way, O Lord, when I go to my chamber—not sinning there—and when I come down to my meals—not getting out of Your way by wrong-eating or drinking. When I go to my shop, or to my work, to the field or to the market, to the streets and to the Exchange let me not err in anything. Still, Lord, lead me in the way everlasting and may no path of business, no path of recreation, no path of society, no path of solitude ever take me out of Your way, but wherever I am let the whole of me be altogether and wholly in the whole of Your way.” You see what a full prayer it is as to its objects!

2. But it is also a great prayer, if you consider it in the matter of its modes. “Lead me.” How does God lead? Brothers and Sisters, He leads us by the Law. The Law tells us what we ought to do. The Ten Commandments of the Law are, as it were, ten signposts, all of them saying—“This is the way; walk you in it.” He leads us, better still, by the example of Christ—

*“We read our duty in Your Word,  
But in His life the Law appears  
Drawn out in living characters.”*

The Law tells us what we should do, but Jesus has done it for us and shown us how to do it! The whole life of Christ is a leading of us in the way. He leads us in the way by His Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit enlightens the conscience, influences the will, guides the judgment and sweetly leads the heart in the path of sanctity. Under God, the Holy Spirit, the ministry often becomes our guide in the way everlasting. Some choice word from God’s servants, coming at a right time, may check us when we would do evil, may inspirit us when we would faint in the way of right. And then good books and I know not what besides—the example of the saints, the hints of Providence, the emotions of our own hearts when near to God— these are often prompts to guide and lead us in the way everlasting. So, you see, as to its modes the prayer of the text is very comprehensive.

 3. It is, dear Brothers and Sisters, a great prayer, if you think for a

minute of its issues. “Lead me in the way everlasting.” Oh, what a word is that word, “everlasting!” I think I see before me the gate of pearl, as though this word, “everlasting,” were that glorious gate. With what soft radiance it beams upon my eyes at this moment! And lo, it turns upon its hinges! It stands wide open and what do I see? Everlasting! Everlasting! Why, I see before me the sea of glass and the harpers standing on that waveless ocean, “where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.” And what do I hear? I hear their songs like the sound of many waters, yet sweet as harpers harping with their harps!

And what do I see as I gaze, but Jesus Christ, the sun and center of Heaven’s Glory? And I behold His saints who trod this way everlasting on earth, continuing, still, to tread it, proceeding further into the bliss of His Presence and into the ecstasy of His love and into the experience of His fellowship! Every day is advancing in this way that has no end, this way everlasting! Oh, what a prayer this is! I, when I say, “Lead me in the way everlasting,” as good as ask for a holy life, a happy death and a Heaven to crown it all! I do ask for all that is in the Covenant, all that Christ came to give, all that God has laid up in store and all that the Spirit works in men. It is a mighty prayer, indeed!

4. The last remark is the prayer is most comprehensive as to the persons who may fitly use it. It has but one stroke and aim. It is, “Lead me, lead me.” But it is suitable to thousands. It is a great prayer and it is just suitable to your lips—yours, my Brother! Yours, my Sister. Yours, whom I could not address by either of those names. Yours, O stranger to the Grace of God. “Lead me.” Who is there here whom it would not suit? There are none too well grown in Divine Grace and none too far gone in sin!

“Lead me.” Is there one that is so far off from God and hope that she has given herself up to despair? When your heart is overwhelmed within you, He can lead you to the Rock that is higher than you are and bring you out of the way of ruin into the way everlasting! Is there a man here whose backslidings have become so numerous that he dares no longer look up? Friend, your prayer can still reach God’s ear! “Lead me in the way everlasting.” Poor Prodigal, if you cannot return, if you feel yourself too vile to hope, yet He can come to you, even if to Him you cannot come! Breathe the prayer, “Lead me, Lord, even me, from the depths of Hell. I cry unto You like Jonah out of the whale’s belly! Out of the Hell of my despair, out of the Hell of my infamous sin, I venture to ask You—black-handed, black-mouthed, black-hearted as I am—lead me, O my God!”

He will hear you, Sinner, through the intercession of Jesus. He will wash you in the atoning blood. He will guide you and bring you, even you, into the way everlasting. Let it not, then, be omitted by any one of us to make this our prayer before we leave this house! I charge you, let not this evening’s gathering be in vain, and I know it will be in vain to each one present who is not led so to pray. Come! Let us pray this prayer together and may the Lord hear us!  
[Then the people bowed their heads and worshipped and said “Amen” after

the following prayer.]  
“O Lord, my God, lead me in the way everlasting! I need it! You have made me to teach others and my example influences many. Lead me in the way everlasting! And Your servants who gather around me, my beloved deacons and elders, whose example, also, will be potent for good if they are good, and for evil if they are evil—Lord, hear them as they say, ‘Lead us in the way everlasting.’ And the members of the Church, the many hundreds, yes, the thousands who are associated in Church fellowship here—who eat of Your bread and drink of Your cup—O hear them, such of them as are now present who shall now cry unto You, ‘Lead me in the way everlasting.’

“Hear every Brother in dilemma and difficulty, every Sister in duty and danger, every heart that is weary, every soul that is sick who says, ‘Lead me in the way everlasting.’ And Lord, hear the unconverted sinner as he breathes this desire towards your Throne of Grace. Is there one here that has left the paths of virtue and of honesty and do his lips tremblingly say, ‘Lead me in the way everlasting’? Lord, hear his supplication! Lord, hear it for Jesus’ sake. Where ever there stands or sits in this Tabernacle one old or young, rich or poor, learned or illiterate, moral or immoral—if there is such a one here who in his heart says, ‘Father, forgive me and lead me in the way everlasting’—O do You answer that prayer speedily, for Your dear Son’s sake. And now, once more, for Jesus’ sake we do each of us beseech you, ‘Lead me in the way everlasting.’ Amen.”

*PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 139.*

[Mr. Spurgeon’s illness prevented his revising the sermons of last week and he much regrets that in the discourse entitled, “The Upper Hand,” (Sermon #901), a passage concerning the Law has been wrongly printed. The mistake was corrected as soon as observed.]

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DAVID’S FIVE-STRINGED HARP  
NO. 2527

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JULY 25, 1897. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, MARCH 27, 1884.

**“I said unto the LORD, You are my God: hear the voice of my supplications, O Lord. O God, the Lord, the strength of my salvation, You have covered my head in the day of battle. I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted**

**and the right of the poor. Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto Your name: the upright shall  
dwell in Your Presence.  
Psalm 140:6, 7, 12, 13.**

This Psalm was written by David when he was sorely vexed by many adversaries. These adversaries were bent upon his destruction—they could not bear that the son of Jesse should be favored of God and that he should come to the throne—so they set their wits to work to invent all manner of slanders against him. They misconstrued his actions, they misrepresented his motives. They spat the very venom of asps from their mouths against him and, at the same time, they said to one another, “If we can lead him to do wrong. If we can, somehow or other, entrap him, either in his speech, or in his private character, or in his public actions, then we shall have a weapon wherewith we can smite him.” The ungodly are fully aware that slander is, after all, a very dangerous weapon to handle and, like the Australian boomerang, it is very apt to come back to the man who throws it. Stones, hurled into the air, often fall upon the head of the thrower, and slander often recoils upon those who utter it. So, if they can but get a truthful accusation against a man of God, then they are exceedingly glad. Slander is like shooting at a man with only powder, or with very small shot that can sting, but cannot kill. But, oh, if they can discover some questionable action of the man, or some decided wrongdoing, then they can load their rifles with bullets and have something deadly to fire at the righteous!

David was exceedingly troubled by all this malice on the part of his enemies. He was a man who would have liked to go through the world at peace with everybody. Even when Saul tried to hunt him to the death, you remember that he would not lift his hand against his adversary even when he might have slain him. When, at night, he stood looking at his sleeping foe, and Abishai said to him, “God has delivered your enemy into your hands this day: now, therefore, let me smite him, I pray you, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time.” David answered, “Destroy him not: for who can stretch forth his hand against the Lord’s anointed, and be guiltless?” And when David and his men were in the sides of the great cave at Engedi, Saul came in to sleep awhile and he was, again, in David’s power, but David did not touch him, save only that he cut off a piece of the skirt of the king’s robe that he might show him, afterwards, how completely he was in his servant’s hands. It is peculiarly trying to a man who is thus patient and long-suffering to be incessantly compassed about with false accusations and manifold temptations. David said of his adversaries, “They compassed me about; they compassed me about like bees,” stinging him here, and stinging him there, and stinging him wherever they could!

I want you to notice how this man of God acted in this trying time. He betook himself to his knees—he began to pray, “Deliver me, O Lord, from the evil man: preserve me from the violent man.” And again, in the next Psalm, he said, “Lord, I cry unto You: make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto You.” He found his remedy for all the stings of falsehood in drawing near to the living God! He was a wise man, thus, to bathe his wounds in that bath which alone could take the venom out of them, by a prayerfully drawing near to the Most High. And he mingled great faith with his prayer. When trying to expound this Psalm, I was much struck with the positive way in which David speaks all through it. Notice that sixth verse—“I said unto the Lord, You are my God.” That is a grand way to talk! And then, further on, in the 12th verse—“I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted.” He has no question about the matter, no hesitation. He does not say, “I hope He will,” but, “I know He will, I am confident of it.” And that makes him say, in the last verse, “Surely”—he felt so certain about it that he could say, “Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto Your name.”

It is a blessed thing when faith rises as tribulations increase. A little faith may do for a skirmish with the enemy, but you need the full assurance of faith for a pitched battle. When the waters are up to the ankles, a little faith may enable you to stand. But when you get to “waters to swim in,” then you need, in childlike confidence, to cast yourself entirely upon the stream of Divine Love, or else, assuredly, you will sink. May God be pleased to increase the faith of all of us who believe in Jesus! If we are tempted and tried very sorely, may the Great High Priest, whom we cannot see, but who always sees us and foresees every danger to which we are exposed, pray for us till He can say to each one of us, as He did to Peter, “Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not.” For, if faith keeps her proper place and prayer does her duty, there will be a way for the child of God to escape from every trial.

There are five things in my text to which I especially want to draw the attention of any who are in sore trouble—and particularly those who are in trouble from enemies who are seeking to ruin them. That which occupied and satisfied David’s mind may wisely occupy and satisfy ours when we are in a similar condition to his. Flowers from which this bee has sucked some honey are the kind of flowers for us to light upon, with the expectation that in them we shall find honey, too! The first thing I see here is, possession asserted. “I said unto the Lord, You are my God.” The second is, a petition presented. “Hear the voice of my supplications, O Lord.” The third is, preservation experienced. “O God the Lord, the strength of my salvation, You have covered my head in the day of battle.” The fourth is, protection expected. “I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor.” The last is, praise predicted. “Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto Your name: the upright shall dwell in Your Presence.” I can only speak very briefly upon each head.

I. The first is very precious. I pray that every child of God may realize and experience it. It is POSSESSION ASSERTED. “I said unto the Lord, You are my God.”

What was the possession? It was the Lord Himself! “I said unto the LORD, You are my God.” The word, “LORD,” here, means Jehovah. You see that it is in capital letters and wherever our translators print the word, “LORD” thus, they mean Jehovah. “I said unto Jehovah, the only living and true God, You are my God.” This is a wonderful speech for David to make—“‘You are my God,’ in opposition to the gods of the heathen. They may worship Baal and Ashtaroth, but, ‘You are my God.’ I count other gods to be idols, the works of men’s hands, and I despise them. All other confidences, all other grounds of trust are to me but as broken cisterns that can hold no water. ‘I said unto Jehovah, the only living God, You are my God,’ in opposition to every other who is called God.”

“‘I said unto Jehovah, You are my God.’ I have taken You unto myself as much as if no other man ever trusted You. I feel that I could stand alone and acknowledge You to be the God of the whole earth. I said to my heart, ‘All that God is, is henceforth mine.’ He has given Himself to me in the Covenant wherein He said, ‘I will be their God.’ And He is as much mine as if He belonged to nobody else. Yes, as fully, as completely and as entirely mine, if I am a Believer in Him, as if I were His only child, His only chosen, His only redeemed one.” Oh, but this is a wonderful thing, to put the lines of possession round the Infinite, to lay the grasp of faith upon the Incomprehensible, and to say, “Jehovah, You are my God”! Your possessions, dear Friends, are very large. “Why do you say that?” asks one—“my garments are wearing out and I am sure I do not know how I shall ever renew them. My cupboard is very bare and my wallet is empty.” My dear Brother in Christ, you are a very rich man, after all, for all these treasures that may be eaten up with moth, or cankered and corrupted, what are they? But if God is your God, all things are yours, for all things are in God and the God who has given Himself to us cannot deny us anything! No, He has already, by that very act, given everything to us! So I pray that every child of God may know that he has this possession and be able to say without any hesitancy, “O Jehovah, You are my God.”

Observe in the text, not only mention made of the possession, but of the claim to it. “I said unto Jehovah, You are my God.” David exhibited his title deeds. He did not say to himself, “That possession is mine, but I will leave it unrecognized and unclaimed,” but he declared his right to it—“I said unto Jehovah, You are my God.” Oh, if the children of God would sometimes be silent instead of speaking, they would be wise! But if, on the other hand, they would sometimes speak instead of remaining silent, they might be equally wise! Have you, dear Friend, ever said to the Lord, “You are my God.” Have you said it? “Well, I have hoped it,” says one. Oh, but I want you to get much beyond that, till, with full assurance, helped by the Holy Spirit, you can say, “It is so! My faith has grasped my God and I have dared to say it, say it at the Mercy Seat, say it when I stood at the foot of the Cross—and I expect to say it, before long, when I stand before Jehovah’s Throne above, ‘You are my God!’ I put in my claim. I dare not do otherwise. I could not let You go without claiming You as my own. O Lord, You have been my dwelling place in all generations. I have said unto You, You are my God.”

Notice also where this claim was made, in whose Presence, and who was the attesting Witness to it—“I said unto Jehovah, You are my God.” It is a very easy thing to say to the minister, “The Lord is my God,” or to say it to some Christian friend by way of profession. But it may not be true. It is a very solemn thing to be able to say to Jehovah, “You are my God.” True Believers have dialogs with their God! They are accustomed to speak with the Most High. They may say some good things to men, but they say their best things to God—“I said unto Jehovah, You are my God.” Can you stand, at this moment, in the dreadful Presence of the Eternal? Can you realize to yourself that He sees and hears you, that He is all around you, that He is in you? Can you think of His infinite holiness and His inflexible justice and yet say to Him, “You are my God; You are a consuming fire, but You are my God”? Even our God, the God of those who believe, is a consuming fire, yet we call Him ours. It is a grand thing, in time of trouble, in time of slander, in time of temptation, if you can just turn your back on it all and say, “I look to God, and I say, ‘O Jehovah, You are my God. I say it even in Your Presence.’” If you can truly say this, it will spread a delightful calm over your spirit! It will encase you as in an armor of proof! It will make your bleeding wounds to be stanched and your broken heart to rejoice, if you can say it!

And, once more, it seems to me to be a grand point in this text to note the occasion chosen by David to say, “You are my God.” It was in the time of his trouble that he repeated to himself the fact that he had made this declaration. “‘I said unto Jehovah, You are my God.’ Men said that I had a devil, but I said, ‘You are my God.’ They said I was a castaway, but I said, ‘You are my God.’ They said I was without a friend, but I said unto Jehovah, ‘You are my God.’ They said of me everything they could think of that was bad and they would have said worse things if they could have thought of them. And after they had done their worst and said all they could say, I said unto Jehovah, ‘You are my God.’”

I cannot say that I care much for a conversation which consists all of, “he said and I said,” and, “says he and says I,” and so on. But for once it is good for a man to tell us what he said! Sometimes, in the court, a judge stops a witness and says, “I do not want to know what you said, and what the other man said! I want to know what you saw.” But in this case, we do not wish to stop the good man. We wish him to go on and tell us more of what he said when he was in the very midst of his trouble. “‘I said unto Jehovah, You are my God,’ and my enemies may say what they like after that. Now, open your mouths, let your venom come forth—you who are like adders and asps, sting as sharply as you may, you can do me no harm, for, ‘I said unto Jehovah, You are my God.’”

That is the first thing I see in the text—possession asserted. II. The next thing I see is, A PETITION PRESENTED.  
It ran in this fashion—“Hear the voice of my supplications, O Lord,”

from which I gather that his prayers were frequent. He puts the word in the plural. “Hear the voice of my supplications.” He did not, in those days of trouble, pray once, and have done with praying, but he prayed again, and again, and again, and again, and again, and again! When you have double trouble, take care that you have double prayer. When men speak worst against you, then speak most with your God. Multiply your supplications as God multiplies your tribulations. “Hear the voice of my supplications, O Lord.” Importunate prayers will prevail.

Next, I gather that David’s prayers were full of meaning. “Hear the voice of my supplications.” There are some people’s prayers that are dumb prayers. They offer just so many words and yet there is no voice in them. It is a grand thing to have a voiceful prayer. We cannot always tell what is the “voice” of a man’s prayer, especially when that prayer is full of moans, tears, sobs and sighs, but God hears a peculiar “voice” in every true supplication. If there were a houseful of children and they were all to cry, yet a mother would distinguish her baby’s supplication from all the other cries. And when she went to the child, she would find out what the little one wanted. You and I would not know, perhaps, but she does. “Poor darling,” she says, and she puts herself into such sympathy and union with her baby that she soon discovers the child’s needs. What the baby cannot express, the mother can hear and discern. And when you cannot pray as you would, God can hear the voice of your supplications just as if you had said what you wanted to say. He takes the meaning out of our hearts, for our thoughts are like words to God. Remember that to speak into a man’s ear, you must make a sound, otherwise he cannot distinguish your voice, but in God’s ear there need be no sound whatever, for He can hear the voice of your tears, the voice of your silent supplication—

*“To Him there’s music in a groan,  
And beauty in a tear.”*  
Is it not a blessed thing that God understands the meaning of our prayers? “Hear the voice of my supplications.”

We also learn that David’s prayers were meant for God. “I said unto Jehovah, You are my God. Hear the voice of my supplications, O Jehovah.” Some men’s prayers are meant for themselves—just to quiet their consciences. Other men’s prayers are meant for their friends, that they may see what pious people they are. But the true suppliant’s prayer is meant for God! When he addresses the envelope that contains his supplications, he addresses it to the God of Heaven, for the prayer is meant for Him.

And, once more, David’s prayers were of such a kind that he could not rest unless he had the Lord’s attention. This was his great cry, “Hear the voice of my supplications, O Jehovah.” He could not bear to hear his own voice unless God heard that voice. I urge every troubled child of God to go straight to his own God and cry unto Him. You thought of going down the street and calling on Mrs. So-and-So, and telling her your sorrow. Yes, very well, you may do so if you like. But it is a shorter road to go to God with your trouble. Straightforward makes the best runner and there is no door that has such an inviting knocker, and that opens so easily, as the door of God! Go to the Lord with your trouble. Ask Him to hear you, for assuredly He will.

So much, then, on that second point. We have spoken of possession asserted and a petition presented.  
III. Now, very briefly, David, to encourage himself, mentions PRESERVATION EXPERIENCED. “O God, the Lord, the strength of my salvation, You have covered my head in the day of battle.” As much as to say, “You have done this for me before. Will You not do the same again? As You have begun with me, do not leave off with me till You have taken me to the country where there are no more battles—and where my head shall be covered with a crown of glory—and need not be covered with a helmet to ward off the enemy’s sword.”  
You remember that when David went out to meet Goliath, two warriors came towards him, for Goliath came out with his armor-bearer—“the man that bore the shield went before him.” Poor little David! He had no armor-bearer, had he? Saul had offered him armor that he might wear in the fight, but it did not fit him. He had never tried and proved such a protection as that, so he laid it aside. But was David without armor? No! The Hebrew of our text runs, “You have covered my head in the day of armor.” That is to say, God had been David’s Armor-Bearer. The Lord had borne a shield before him. Instead of the harness in which warriors put their confidence, God had covered David with a coat of mail through which no sword of the enemy could possibly cut its way! Has it not been so with us in days past? Have we not had our heads covered when God held His shield above us? Have we not been guarded from all hurt by the Providence and by the Grace of the Most High? I know it is so! Well, then, the God who delivered us out of the jaws of the lion and the claws of the bear will deliver us from the uncircumcised Philistine! And the God that in our youth taught our hands to war and our fingers to fight, so that the bow of steel was broken by our arms, will not leave us and forsake us now that we have grown older and feebler—but even to the end will He preserve and protect us! Therefore, let us be of good cheer and let our past experience encourage us to trust in the Lord.  
“You have covered my head in the day of battle,” said David; that is, God had guarded his most vital part. “Lord, I have a cut or two here and there. I have scars upon my right arm and my foot has been injured, but, ‘You have covered my head.’ The adversaries could not give me such a blow as would lay bare my brain and spill my soul upon the field, for ‘You have covered my head.’” Flesh wounds there may be, and deep bleeding gashes that cause pain and sickness of heart, but the essential part has been guarded and we may rest contented that it shall be protected unto the end!  
Moreover, David adds here that God had been the strength of his salvation. The power that had saved him had been God’s power and it is so with all of us who have been brought into the way of life. Some of us came to Christ long ago, yet still we sing—  
*“Many days have passed since then,  
Many dangers I have seen.  
Yet have been upheld till now—  
Who could hold me up but You?”*  
Now, if the Lord had meant to destroy us, would He have done so much for us as He has done? I feel, when I think of some of my present troubles, very much like Admiral Drake who had sailed round the world and, here and there fought the Spaniards on the great ocean. And when he came back to the Thames, it blew a gale and his ship was likely to be driven ashore. He said, “No, no, no! We have not gone round the world and now come home to be drowned in a ditch!” So let us say, “No, no, no! We have not experienced so much of the goodness of God to be drowned in a paltry ditch like this.” So let us still rejoice in the God who has preserved us until now and who will preserve us until the day of Jesus Christ!  
IV. But I must hasten on to notice the fourth thing in our text, that is, PROTECTION EXPECTED. “I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted and the right of the poor.”  
If a man is oppressed, if he is slandered, if he is evilly spoken of, let him say to himself, “God will see to this. He is the Judge of all the earth and shall not He do right?” Do not meddle with the case yourself. Leave it in the Lord’s hands. Our proverb says, “If you want a thing done well, do it yourself,” but, if it is anything which has to do with your own character, let me tell you that this is the worst proverb that ever was invented! If you want a blot that you have made, or that somebody else has made, multiplied into two, try and rub it out with your finger while it is wet. But if you are wise, you will leave it alone. All the dirt that ever comes on a man’s coat will brush off when it is dry. I do believe that, sometimes, holy characters shine all the brighter because they have been tarnished for a while by the filth cast upon them by ungodly men. If men cast mud at you, leave it alone. “But,” says one, “this slander affects my character.” Oh, yes, I know, but who are you that your character should not be assailed? “But it is the only one I have,” you say. Well, that is quite right— and mind that you do not get another and a worse one—by making a fool of yourself! Leave it alone and be wise! The God who gave you the Grace to have a good character will take care of what He has given you and you need not be afraid, for God is a righteous Judge.  
Moreover, beside that, God is a compassionate Friend. And when He sees any of His dear saints very poor and afflicted, do you not think that when they cannot take care of themselves, He will take care of them? David thought so, for he said, “I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor.” The rich man can take care of his own rights, but the poor man cannot—so God will take care that the poor man shall not lose his rights, or if he does, God will avenge him of his adversary. Trust your cause with God! You can not have a better Advocate or a better Helper. Put not forth your hand unto unrighteousness, neither speak you on your own behalf. You will be wise if you will do as your Master did, “who, when He was reviled, reviled not again.” Who was led as a lamb to the slaughter and, as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so opened He not His mouth.  
V. Now, lastly, here is PRAISE PREDICTED. “Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto Your name.”  
They are down in the dumps today. They are troubled and burdened, despised and made to cry. But, says David, “Surely they shall give thanks unto Your name.” Praise is assured by gratitude. There shall come a day when their gratitude shall be so great that they shall be obliged to give thanks unto God on account of all that He has done for them. “Surely” they shall. God will so astound them by His delivering mercy that they shall be compelled to speak up and to speak out—and give thanks unto the name of the Lord.  
Yes, and they shall do more than that, for they shall not only express their thanks, but they shall praise God by their holy confidence. “The upright shall dwell in Your Presence.” They shall be drawn nearer to God and be peaceful, happy, quiet and at ease. This is a beautiful and comforting promise—“The upright shall dwell in Your Presence.” All the world is up in arms against them and there is a great uproar. And what do they say? “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our life: and we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” One of the grandest ways of praising God is not by singing Psalms and hymns—that is a very sweet way of praising Him—but a grander way is by being quite calm in the time of trouble, quite happy in the hour of distress, just dwelling with God and finding all your grief relieved in His blessed Presence. How really and truly a child praises his father when he just bears anything from him! “It must be right,” he says, “for my father does it.” And I believe when a child of God says, “It is the Lord. Let Him do what seems good to Him,” he is praising God more than he could ever do with the cornet or the high-sounding cymbals! Let us try to do that.  
And, once more, we can equally praise God by abiding in fellowship with Him. “The upright shall sit in Your Presence.” So it may be rendered. How can I explain it? If you could look within the veil up yonder, in the Glory Land, you would see a Lamb in the midst of the Throne of God, and round about Him all those redeemed by blood who have entered into their happiness. And you down here, in your time of trouble, can just go to your Father’s table and take your seat as one of His children, or go to your dear Savior’s feet and take your place with Mary—and so you will be praising the Lord Jesus Christ in the most effectual manner! I know that your temptation will be to be buzzing about the kitchen with Martha, fretting and worrying over what has happened and what has not happened—but all that the Lord Jesus Christ will say to you will be, “Martha, Martha, Martha, Martha, you are cumbered about many things.” I know men who ought to be called Martha, for they are as much cumbered as ever the women are and just as ready to fret and to worry, so that the Savior might say to them, “You are cumbered about many things, but if you want to praise Me, come and sit here. Come and learn of Me, for that is the good part which shall not be taken away from you. Come and listen to Me. Give up your whole heart to drinking in My Word and I will bless you. You come and mind My business and I will stay and mind your business. Come and try Me, and I will give you proof that trusting in Me is the safest and best way of living in this world.”

All this I have spoken to the people of God. I would you were all such, but, if you are not, I pray the Lord to bring you into the bonds of the Covenant. It is a very blessed thing to come to Christ and, when you do come to Him, all these precious things are yours! Trust in what Christ has done for sinners. Trust in the promise of the faithful God to save all who believe in Jesus! And when you have trusted, you shall never be confounded, sinner though you are. The Lord bless you, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALMS 140 and 141.**

Psalm 140 *.*To the Chief Musician, a Psalm of David. Very likely this Psalm was written by David while he was being hunted about by Saul, and while all manner of falsehoods were being spoken against him. He therefore comforts himself in his God. He writes this Psalm and he means to have it sung, and sung well, so he dedicates it “to the chief Musician.” There are some parts of our life which are so crowded with urgent necessity and so full of Divine mercy that we feel that if we ever get through them, we will make a song about our deliverance and dedicate that song unto God through “the chief Musician.”

Verse 1. Deliver me, O Lord, from the evil man: preserve me from the violent man. He is wicked at heart and violent in his temper. Whenever we meet with such an adversary, we have good reason to cry to God, “Deliver me: preserve me.” Yet, if we must have enemies, we prefer that they should be bad men. We do not wish to have a child of God against us. If we must have an antagonist, we would much rather that he should be one who is “evil” and “violent.”

2. Which imagine mischief in their hearts continually are they gathered together for war. It goes hard with a peace-loving man—a man of quiet spirit—when he is beset by those whose very hearts are set on mischief and who cannot meet one another without conspiring to prepare for some fresh form of battle.

3. They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders’ poison is under their lips. Selah. Before a serpent strikes any object, its tongue is in quick motion. If you ever see a cobra when he is angry, you will notice that his tongue darts to and fro, as if impatient to sting. And the Psalmist, here, writing of the tongue of the ungodly, remarks how quickly it moves. They seem to have sharpened it—to have prepared it for all manner of mischief. “Adders’ poison”—the poison of the deadliest known serpent in the East—“is under their lips.” Perhaps you think that this is a very dreadful description of some remarkably bad man. So it is, but remember that when Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, wishes to describe us all, both Jews and Gentiles, he quotes this very passage and says, “The poison of asps is under their lips.” There is still poison in our mouths unless Grace has taken it away. We, too, shall soon be speaking evil and talking slanderously, if the Grace of God does not keep our tongues and our lips.

4, 5. Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked; preserve me from the violent man who has planned to overthrow my goings. The proud have hid a snare for me. “They have put it where I cannot see it. I do not know where it is, nor what it is, but I know that they want to lead me into such sin that they can afterwards turn round upon me and accuse me for it. ‘The proud have hid a snare for me.’”

5. And cords; they have spread a net by the wayside. “Close to where I am walking, so that if I go even an inch out of the way, I shall be caught in it. They seem to be tempting me in my usual course of life. ‘They have spread a net by the wayside.’”

5. They have set traps for me. Selah. As men try to ensnare poor birds in all kinds of traps, so the ungodly sometimes seek the destruction of the righteous by setting many snares for them.

6. I said unto the LORD, You are my God. Ah, that was the right thing to do—to leave the ungodly and their traps and go straight to God. “I said unto the Lord, You are my God.”

6, 7. Hear the voice of my supplications, O Lord. O GOD the Lord, the strength of my salvation, You have covered my head in the day of battle. “When the darts flew thick and fast, and when the battleaxe came down with a mighty crash, ‘You have covered my head in the day of battle.’” This Psalm reminds me of that passage in the song of Deborah and Barak—“O my Soul, you have trodden down strength.” What wonders we also have been enabled to do by the upholding and preserving Grace of God!

8. Grant not, O LORD, the desires of the wicked: further not their wicked devices lest they exalt themselves. Selah. If it seemed that God’s Providence was helping them against the righteous, they would be too proud to be borne with—they would lift up their heads on high, and say, “See how God is with us, how He permits us to have our way?”

9. As for the head of those that compass me about, let the mischief of their own lips cover them. This may be read as a prophecy in the future tense—“The mischief of their own lips shall cover them.”

10. Let burning coals fall upon them. Or, “Burning coals shall fall upon them.”  
10. Let them be cast into the fire; into deep pits, that they rise not up again. The Psalmist doubtless had before his mind’s eye the picture of Sodom, where burning coals fell on the guilty cities, and where men stumbled into the fire and when they tried to escape, fell into the deep slime pits and perished. And, truly, it is but just that, if men lie and slander—and try to tempt the righteous to their destruction—they should fall into the pits that they have themselves dug.  
11. Let not an evil speaker be established in the earth. Neither shall he be! The man who is glib of tongue and who uses that facility of speech for the destruction of the characters of godly men shall never be established.  
11. Evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him. His own dogs shall eat him. He was a huntsman against the righteous and, behold, the evil of his own mouth shall turn upon him to devour him! “Evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him.”  
12. I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor. We may always leave such matters with the Lord. God is the poor man’s Executor and the proud man’s Executioner! He will take care of the oppressed and such as are down-trodden.  
13. Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto Your name; the upright shall dwell in Your Presence. Now let us read the next Psalm, which is to much the same effect.  
Psalm 141:1. LORD, I cry unto You: make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto You. You see how a child of God prays when he is in trouble. David says, “I cry unto You,” and then the second time, “I cry unto You.” And he cried for God as well as to Him. “Make haste unto me.” The very best thing you can do, when you cannot help yourself, is to cry unto God, for He will help you.  
2. Let my prayer be set forth before You as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. David was probably far away from the Tabernacle and he could not join in presenting the morning or the evening sacrifice there. But he prayed God to let his prayer be such a sacrifice—“Let it be sweet as the perfume of the smoking spices of the morning; let it be as acceptable as the burning lamb of eventide.”  
3. Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips. Our mouth is a door and it needs a watchman, and there is no watchman who can keep it except God, Himself. “Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.”  
4. Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practice wicked works with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties. That last petition is a very proper one. We are neither to think the thoughts of the wicked, nor to practice their ways, nor to enjoy their pleasures. “Let me not eat of their dainties.” There are certain amusements which are fraught with sin—“Let me not eat of their dainties.” There are some erroneous doctrines which are very pleasant to the taste of those who believe them—“Let me not eat of their dainties.” There are some sins that seem to have a peculiarly sweet flavor and so are very attractive to men—“Let me not eat of their dainties.”  
5. Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness. You see, dear Friends, David cries out against slander. He cannot bear that wicked men should lie against his character, but he says, “I do not want to be left alone where I am in the wrong. I do not wish to be flattered. ‘Let the righteous smite me.’ He is the man who ought to do it. When I have done wrong, it is his duty to correct me, and I wish him to do it. ‘Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness.’”  
5*.*And let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil which shall not break my head. Some people cannot bear to be spoken to about a fault. They feel as if the reprover had broken their head, directly, and they are as savage as a bear with a sore head! But the child of God is not so—he looks upon the rebuke of a good man as being like healing, sweetsmelling oil—and he prizes it. Depend upon it, the man who will tell you your faults is your best friend! It may not be a pleasant thing for him to do it and he knows that he is running the risk of losing your friendship— but he is a true and sincere friend—therefore thank him for his reproof and learn how you may improve by what he tells you.  
5. For yet my prayer, also, shall be in their calamities. I will try to repay the righteous for their rebukes by praying for them when they are in trouble. I will say to my God, “These good men tried to keep me right and they smote me when I did wrong. Now, Lord, they are in trouble, I pray You to help them and bring them out of it.”  
6. When their judges are overthrown in stony places, they shall hear my words; for they are sweet. Wicked men often will not hear the Gospel, but when they get into trouble, they will. When their judges are overthrown in stony places, then they begin to be willing to hear what good men have to say. A bitter world makes a sweet word and when Providence frowns upon us, it often happens that we love the Gospel all the more, and smile upon its messengers, for their words are sweet.

7. Our bones are scattered at the grave’s mouth. “We are like men ready to be put into their graves, or the cause that we advocate seems so totally dead that we seem to be like dry bones that are flung out of a grave.”  
7. As when one cuts and cleaves wood upon the earth. “We feel as if we were like chips out of a tree that has been cut down.”  
8. But my eyes are on You, O God the Lord: in You is my trust. “I may be cut to pieces, I may be chopped up, I may seem to be made into a bundle of firewood, but, Lord, my eyes are on You. ‘O God the Lord: in You is my trust.’”  
8. Leave not my soul destitute. “If I have You, I am still rich. Even if I lie at the grave’s mouth, I may still live. But if You are gone from me, then am I destitute, indeed.”  
9, 10. Keep me from the snares which they have laid for me, and the traps of the workers of iniquity. Let the wicked fall into their own nets, while I escape. Amen! So let it be!

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—632, 626, 627.  
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INTERCESSORY PRAYER  
NO. 1049

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, MAY 5, 1872, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“For yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities.” Psalm 141:5.**

THIS is a very difficult passage in the original and it is hard to fix its meaning with absolute certainty. However, it is no business of mine, at the present, to go into the various interpretations which have been given, for I am aiming at something else. I am, for my immediate purpose, quite content with the authorized version. The meaning given to the passage by our translators is this—David says although the righteous man should rebuke him most sternly so as to strike his conscience and bring before him his wrong-doing—and even though he should do this with considerable severity, yet he would not be displeased with him. He would love him all the better, be thankful to him for having acted so faithfully, and he would prove his love by continuing to pray for his reprover, should the good man at any time be overtaken by calamity.

David would always give his honest censor a warm place in his prayers. Now, if this is the meaning, and I think it is, it shows us that David was in the habit of praying for the saints. If he had not been, he would not have said that even in their calamities his prayers should go up for them. He had made it his daily custom to bring before his God in his private prayers the names of God’s righteous ones, or else, I say, he would not have made the remark that even if some of them should rebuke him and reprove him sternly, he still would continue to pray for them.

Our subject this morning shall be the high duty of intercession, a duty all too little regarded in these days. We shall speak upon it, first, as the text would lead us to do, in reference to saints, and, secondly, we shall urge it upon you on behalf of sinners.

I. First, then, we have to speak upon the duty of INTERCESSORY FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD. To arrange our thoughts in some order we will take for our first keynote the word obligation. It is incumbent upon every child of God to pray for the rest of the sacred family. Does not Nature, itself, teach us this? I mean not the old nature, but the new nature created within us by the Holy Spirit. Did you not find, my Brethren, as soon as you were yourselves possessors of Divine life, that you began without any exhortation to pray for others? Your very first believing cries began with, “Our Father which are in Heaven,” and so included others besides yourself.

Among the earliest prayers which a renewed heart offers will be one for the man through whose agency it was brought to Jesus. No new convert forgets to pray for the minister who was the instrument of his conversion. The newly delivered soul also pleads for others who are still in the deplorable condition from which Grace has enabled it to escape. “You have brought my soul out of prison, Lord, set my fellow captives free. In Your loving kindness enable others to taste the sweetness of Your salvation.” Then the Christian people who have at any time conversed with the convert, who have ministered to his comfort or instruction, will be sure to obtain a share in his prayers—for a renewed heart is a tenderly grateful heart—and a man is not born-again from above who feels no thankfulness to earnest friends below.

Set a bird free from a cage and it will sing you its thanks as it speeds forth into the air! Even thus, if you are enabled to open the prison doors of bandaged spirits, they will repay your loving efforts with prayer. I say it is a natural instinct of the new-born Believer to begin to intercede for others, and this instinct continues with him throughout his life. It is one of the things that he must do—it is a pleasure for him to do it—it would be impossible for him to utterly cease from it, for the indwelling Spirit in his bosom makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

And, Brothers and Sisters, as it is an instinct of the Heaven-born nature, so it is a law of the elect household. The saints in their due order may be described as “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.” Every Believer has a watchman’s place appointed him in the matter of prayer and he is bound not to be silent, but to give the Lord no rest till He establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. We are all equally bound to pray for the peace of Jerusalem and our prosperity is made to hinge upon it. The new commandment which the Lord has given us, in which He bids us, “love one another,” necessitates our praying for each other. How shall a man claim that he loves his brother if he never intercedes with God for him?

Can I live continually with my fellow-Believers and see their sorrows, and never cry to God on their behalf? Can I observe their poverty, their tribulation, their temptation, their heaviness of heart and yet forget them in my supplications? Can I see their work of faith and labor of love and never implore a blessing upon them? Can I wrap up myself within myself and be indifferent to the cares of those who are my Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus? Impossible! But if I can, I must belong to some other family than that of God, for in the family of love common sympathy leads to constant intercession. God forbid that we should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for our Brethren! Every bee in the hive of the Church should bring in its own share of this honey to the common store. As all the roots of a tree traverse the earth for nutriment and all suck in provision for the benefit of all, so should each Believer with open mouth of prayer search out and drink in spiritual blessings for the benefit of the whole Church. Forget not, then, my Brethren, the sweet obligation under which you are laid by your relationship to the saints and their everblessed Lord.

Moreover, Beloved, we recognize a vital union among Believers, a oneness of a very intimate kind. We are not barely brethren, but we are “members of the same body.” Christ is the Head of His mystical body the Church, and we are all members of His body. Now, as in the human frame each separate limb, member, organ, vein and nerve is necessary to the whole, so in the Church each Believer is necessary to the rest, and the rest are necessary to him. We may not be able to show what particular mischief would be done to the arm by an injury to the knee, yet, rest assured there would be a sympathetic suffering. No single cell or sac within the whole system can be out of order without in some degree affecting all the rest of the frame.

Even so has God made us dependent upon one another—far more than we imagine. In Church unity every man contributes to the health or to the disease of the whole corporation, nor can he avoid doing so. No man lives to himself in the Church of God and no man dies to himself. When a Believer grows in Grace, he is enriched not for himself alone—the Christian community has increased its spiritual wealth by his gains. When, on the other hand, a man declines in Divine things and so becomes poor and feeble, it is not to himself, alone, that the injury occurs, but in a measure the Church is impoverished, weakened, and injured. O Brethren, since this is the case, let us discharge abundantly the duties which we owe to the body of which we form a part! And in the delightful exercise of supplication let us abound more and more.

Intercession should throb like a pulse through the whole body, causing every living member to feel the sacred impulse. Intercession is one of the least things which we can do, and yet it is one of the greatest—let us not be slack in it. A prayerless Church member is a hindrance—he is in the body like a rotting bone, or a decayed tooth—and, before long, since he does not contribute to the benefit of his Brethren, he will become a danger and a sorrow to them. Brothers and Sisters, let it not be so with any one of you! Besides, Brethren, if an argument were needed to touch our hearts, it is not far to find. We ourselves owe much to the prayers of others. Many Christians can trace their conversion to their mother’s prayers which went up to Heaven for them when as yet their infant tongues could not pronounce the Savior’s name.

A mother brought them to Jesus and besought Him to lay His hands on them and bless them. Many of you owe your conversion to the pleadings of Sunday school teachers, or to the supplications of ministers, or to earnest individual Christians who were led to intercede for you. Now, if by the way of prayer you have received a blessing, show your gratitude by praying for others! Endeavor to confer the blessing in the same way as you have received it. For myself, personally, I say this morning that no man can do me a truer kindness in this world than to pray for me! I reckon, Brethren, that the more of prayers I have the wealthier I am in real riches, in that form of personal estate which is better that gold and silver.

An old Puritan remarks that when a man thrives in business he sets many hands to work for him, and, he says, when a man grows in usefulness he brings many souls to pray for him and so his business is carried on. The greater the expenditure of Divine Grace in the case of the Lord’s servant, the more he needs intercessory help from all his Brothers and Sisters that he may be able to carry on his work under the Divine blessing. I am under bonds, my Brethren, to pray for you since I know that many of you continually besiege the Throne of Grace on my behalf. I put the argument, therefore, to you—if you have received blessings through the intercession of saints, would you not be ungrateful, indeed, if you did not intercede for others in return?

Did a mother’s prayers bring you to Christ? Then, dear young Mother, send up your entreaties to the Lord for your dear little ones. Did a father’s supplications lead to your salvation? Then, young Man, uphold your father with your constant prayers and so enrich his latter days. Freely you have received, freely give. The soil fertilized by the dew gives back its harvest—you also make a fair return to the Church which has been the channel of blessing to you. It is not, therefore, a matter of choice with us, today, whether we shall pray for our Brothers and Sisters in Christ or not! Beloved Brethren, you are not alive unto God—you have not the instincts of the new life if you do not intercede for the household of faith! You have not the love which is of God—which is the sure sign of regeneration—if you forget intercession! You are unmindful of the debt you owe, and you are acting unworthily of your professed union with the Church of Christ if intercession is neglected by you. As with a trumpet call I would entreat you, my Brothers and Sisters, to effectual, earnest prayer for the family of the living God.

Let us change our watchword now from obligation to honor. What an honor it is to be permitted to pray for the saints! For, observe, this brings us into the closest conceivable fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. We cannot assist in providing an atonement for human sin—“It is finished,” said the Savior, and finished it is. In that work we can have no fellowship except as we receive of its results, for, “He has trod the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with Him.” In preaching the Gospel today, we are exercising an office in which our Lord Jesus has now no share—the Holy Spirit helps us, but the Man, Christ Jesus is at the right hand of the Father and His voice is not heard proclaiming the glad tidings. Therefore, in some respects we have diverse occupations and exercise different offices, but, in the business of intercession we are one—at this very moment our Lord is pleading before the Truth of God and when we intercede for His people we are doing precisely the same!

We, in praying for the saints, have actual present fellowship with our great High Priest who intercedes within the veil. I say again, if I preach today, Christ is not preaching. But if I pray, my voice harmonizes with His! If I pray for the Brethren, I remember that He stands before the Throne of Glory with the breastplate on, having the names of all His chosen glittering there upon its precious stones. Is it not, then, a delightful thing to be partakers with the Son of God in the ministry of intercession? In this service He has made us priests unto our God! He is the great Angel with the golden censor, and the smoke of the incense which He offers ascends with the prayers of the saints before the Lord! Beloved, you would be conformed in service to the Lord Jesus—the opportunity is ready to your hand—be much in intercession for the saints!

And, what an honor it is that we, who so lately were beggars for ourselves at Mercy’s door, are now received so much into royal favor that we may venture to speak a word in the king’s ear for others! It was sovereign mercy which allowed us to say, “Have mercy upon me!” But what condescension is this which has taken us into such nearness with itself that now we can come to the Lord and say, “I would wish to speak a word with You for a Brother of mine. I would venture to ask bounties at Your hands, my Father, for a Sister who needs compassion.” See, my Brothers and Sisters, how eminently you are promoted—you are ordained to the high office of “the King’s remembrancers,” to enquire of Him concerning the good things of His Covenant! You are constituted a royal social worker for the King! He sets before you His open treasury and bids you ask what you will. O priceless Grace!

If you, O Believer, know how to ask by faith, you may hand out to your Brothers and Sisters wealth more precious than the gold of Ophir, for intercession is the key of the ivory palaces wherein are contained the boundless treasures of God! Saints in intercession reach a place where angels cannot stand! Those holy beings rejoice over penitent sinners, but we do not read of their being admitted as suppliants for the saints. Yet we, imperfect as we are, have this favor! We are permitted to open our mouth before the Lord for the sick and for the tried, for the troubled and for the downcast—with the assurance that whatever we shall ask in prayer, believing, we shall receive. In this thing great honor is put upon us. Brothers and Sisters, avail yourselves of this honor!

I know very well if Her Majesty should give a permission to any one of you to call at the palace, and to ask what you would for your friends, you would not neglect the opportunity. Why, in these days if a man thinks he has the ear of a member of Parliament, or somebody in power, it is not often that he neglects the opportunity of speaking for his cousin or his son who desires an office where there is little to do and much to receive. All over the world place-seekers are in abundance. Men of influence, having the ear of the authorities, are always pressed to make all possible use of their position in society. And yet I have to stand here this morning and urge you, dear Brothers and Sisters, who have the ear of God, to exercise your choice prerogative!

You have promises from God of the granting of your request, and many are saying, “I would be spoken for unto the King”—pray to be not slow to help. Use the liberty which your Prince has given you and plead for your Brothers and Sisters! If there are no other who needs your prayers, I eagerly ask for a place in them. “Brethren, pray for us,” said an Apostle— how much more may I say it! Having to minister daily in holy things, our responsibilities and needs are very great. Do not, therefore, forget us when it is well with you. Say a kind thing unto the Prince for His servants and ask Him to grant us more of His Grace.

We will change the word now from honor to excellence. Intercessory prayer is a most excellent thing, for first, it benefits those who use it. I know you desire, Beloved, to be of real service in the Church of God. I trust we have no members of this Church who are satisfied to have their names in the book, and to attend services, and to feel that all is done when this is done. No, you wish to be really helpful and to bring glory to God. Well, then, I urge upon you for this end the excellence of intercessory prayer! First, Brethren, it will suggest to you to know your Brothers and Sisters. You cannot pray well for those you know nothing about. You will not, therefore, go in and out of the assembly not knowing the person who sits next to you in the pew, but you will enquire how the Brethren fare, and, when you hear of anyone being in distress of mind, or body, or estate, you will be ready to take notice of that, in order that you may offer prayer on his account, and then there will be in you a sympathetic knowledge of your Brethren.

Paul tells us to know them that labor among us and are over us in the Lord! And I wish all Church members did know more of their pastor’s struggles, and sorrows, and joys—that they might have more sympathy with him. And the same is true of the rest of the Brethren—the more you know and sympathize the better will your prayers be. And because you will need to know, in order to intercede, I call intercession an excellent exercise. Earnest intercession will be sure to bring love with it. I do not believe you can hate a man for whom you habitually pray. If you dislike any Christian, pray for him doubly—not only for his sake, but for your own— that you may be cured of prejudice and saved from all unkind feeling.

Remember the old story of the man who waited on his pastor to tell him that he did not enjoy his preaching? The minister wisely said, “My dear Brother, before we talk that matter over, let us pray together,” and, after they had both prayed, the complainant found he had nothing to say except to confess that he, himself, had been very negligent in prayer for his pastor. And he laid his not profiting to that account. I ascribe need of brotherly love to the decline of intercessory prayer. Pray for one another earnestly, habitually, fervently, and you will knit your hearts together in love as the heart of one man. This is the cement of fair colors in which the stones of the Church should be laid if they are to be compact together.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, when you pray for one another, not only will your sympathy and love grow, but you will have kinder judgments concerning one another. We always judge leniently those for whom we intercede. If a talebearer represents my Brother in a very black light, my love makes me feel sure that he is mistaken. Did I not pray for him this morning, and how can I hear him condemned? If I am compelled to believe that he is guilty I am very sorry, but I will not be angry with him—but I will pray the Lord to forgive and restore him—remembering myself, also, lest I be tempted. We think our children beautiful because they are our own and have a place in our heart. And in the same way we are quick to perceive any admirable traits of character which may exist in those for whom we intercede—and we are willing to suggest extenuations for the failings of their dispositions.

Prayer is a wondrous blender of hearts and a mighty creator of love. Intercessory prayer is of much efficacy in fostering watchfulness. Suppose that you, as a member of this Church, are brought into contact with backsliders and are led to seek their restoration. Your prayers for their recovery will naturally lead you to pray, “Lord, preserve me from this evil. Keep me from backsliding. Preserve me from becoming cold and indifferent as these Brethren have done.” If we meet with professed Christians who have fallen into drunkenness and we are earnest in pleading with the Lord to rescue them from that horrible ditch, our own souls are made to loathe the sin and to stand upon its watchtower against it. If we perceive that two Brethren have disagreed and cannot be brought into a state of peace, if we pray to God that unity may be restored between them, we are led, also, to ask that we may be of a gentle and quiet spirit—that we may not cause strife—and that if we have caused it at any time we may be prepared to confess the wrong and amend it.

Thus the objects of our prayerful solicitude become beacons to us. If you observe others with critical dispositions and censure them eagerly, and go from house to house to spread the ill-savor industriously, your unhallowed course of action will breed self-righteousness in yourself. But, if you go to the Lord with sorrow about all misdeeds of Brethren and importunately seek the restoration of the erring, you will foster in your own heart tenderness of feeling and watchfulness against sin. Those who supplicate much for others will frequently find on their own lips the prayer, “Search me, O God, and try me, and know my ways. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

I cannot stay to tell you what other excellent things there are wrapped up in this exercise of intercession, but I am persuaded it is one of the holiest, healthiest, and most heavenly exercises in which a devout man can possibly be occupied. Do you not think, dear Brothers and Sisters, that if we were, each one, required upon the spot to give an account of his attention to this excellent duty we should, most of us, need to be ashamed? May I venture to put the question to every Christian here—have you rendered to God and His Church your fair proportion of intercessory prayer? We have not interceded too much, I am certain, for of this salt it may be said, “salt without prescribing how much.” No man prays too much for his fellow man!

Have we prayed enough? I give you space and make a pause in which you may put the question. I will give you my own answer. I am clear as to my duty to this Church in the matter of preaching, for I have not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. If I could learn to preach better I would gladly do so. I am conscious of my failures, but I have served you heartily and faithfully before God in this pulpit. But I cannot say so of my intercessions. I have many confessions to make to God of shortcomings in that department. And I am afraid that a great number of my fellow workers here must plead guilty to the same indictment. You have never missed your class on Sunday afternoon. You are always at your work on time with the Scripture lesson well studied. That is right, but, dear Brother, do you always pray the lesson into your soul?

Dear Sister, have you made a habit of praying for the girls under your care, one by one, with intense fervor? I do not accuse, but I ask you to look into your own soul, for the fault is not a trivial one, but causes ourselves and the Church no little damage. Elders and Deacons of this Church, are you clear in the matter of intercession? Some men among us may be without blame in this business, but I am afraid that the most of us have attended to other duties far beyond the proportion in which we have attended to this. We have prayed in public at the Prayer Meetings, and we have not forgotten supplication for the saints at the family altar, either, I trust. But, still, if we had prayed for our Brethren 10 times as much, or even a 100 times as much, we should not have gone too far!

We stand up, sometimes, on the public platform, and we charge the Church of God with growing cold. Let us ask ourselves the question— Have we, by our prayers, added to her heat? Have we pleaded for her revival? We find fault with the Missionary Societies because such slender results are apparent. Do we pray for missions as we should? I hear a mournful complaint about the present and rising race of preachers—have we interceded for students and for pastors as we should? I hear people speak of Christians as either worldly, superficial or proud. Have you prayed them out of their worldliness and pride? May it not be that you would have done far better if you had prayed for them than found fault with them? Yes, and may not the errors you see in them be, in a considerable measure, traceable to the neglect of the office of intercession by yourself? Oh, let us have done with murmuring and complaining, criticism and finding fault, and take the whole of it up to the Mercy Seat—for if half the breath that is vainly spent in censorious complaints were turned into intercession—there would be much more holiness in the Church!

Now, I must come to the text, again, while I give you another word, and that is extent. David says in the text, “For my prayer also shall be in their calamities” and his meaning is this—if any of the saints of God should, by their fidelity to his soul displease him, he would nevertheless pray for them. Brothers and Sisters, we are not to confine our prayers to those who please us in their mode of addressing us—but we are to pray lovingly for those who are too sharp, too harsh, too cutting in their remarks.

Suppose they should be so severe as to grieve our spirits? Suppose their rebukes appear to be uncalled for, injurious and unjust? We are still bound to pray for them. David, in the text, seems to say this—let the righteous do what they might with him, he would still pray for them in their calamities. And I urge you, my Brethren, if there is any member of this Church who has treated you unkindly, revenge yourself upon him by loving him 10 times more than ever you did, and praying for him more constantly and more earnestly! If some Brother has crushed your spirit and wounded you so that to think of him causes you pain, never mind! The best cure for the wound is to go to God in prayer and pour out your soul for him—ask the Lord to give him a great blessing and to make him a better Christian—to fill him full of Divine love!

And, then, when you see him improved, you will either come to think that you made a mistake in judging what he said, and took wrongly what he meant to do you good, or else you will find that he will come to you and will say, “I was in the wrong, my Brother.” Or, if he does not confess that in words, he will by extra kindness to you acknowledge it in his deeds. And, Brethren, if ever we find a fellow Christian in a calamity, then we are to pray for him doubly. Men of the world leave their companions when they get into trouble—as the herd leaves the wounded deer. We have many friends when all goes well. We have very few when the evil days are lowering. But with Christians it should not be so! We should be faithful friends—we ought to be more kind to those who become poor than we are to others.

If we meet with a fellow Christian who has lost his comfort and is desponding—though his society may not be very pleasant and may even have a depressing influence upon ourselves—we should pray for him more, and try to lift him out of the Slough of Despond. Especially if a Brother in Christ should be slandered we are bound to stand by him. Too many follow the bad habit of getting right out of the way of a man who is disgraced. Somebody has thrown a handful of mud at a professed Christian—let us clear the coast, for the mud may light upon us, too. So say cowards, but we do not! No, Brother, if you belong to the army of Immanuel and our persecuted Brother has done no wrong, let us stand or fall by him! Let us never desert a comrade!

If the world says, “Down with him! Down with him! Down with him!” we will rush like the old Greek hero to the rescue and hold our shield over the fallen one, fighting for him till he can get up again—for one of these days we may be down, too, and we may need a Brother soldier to cover us from the enemy. Let us pray our Brothers and Sisters out of their troubles and not desert them—and if that prayer should be long before it gets an answer, let us persevere in importunity, saying with David, “Yet my prayer shall be in their calamities.”

I shall say no more upon this matter of intercession for the saints, but shall leave it before the Eternal Throne and with your own consciences. I beseech you, unless you are traitors to Christ—if you are members of the true unity, if your souls are knit together by the Holy Spirit—wrestle much for one another and do not let the Covenant Angel go till a blessing shall come to the whole house of God, and then flow into the world at large.

II. Now, secondly, the high office of intercession FOR SINNERS. Upon this I shall speak briefly, but, I trust, earnestly. As a Church we have a crown, and for many years we have held it. But, I would use the language of Christ in the Book of the Revelation. When speaking to one of the Churches, He says, “Hold fast what you have, that no man take your crown.” Now, what has been our crown as a Church? It has not been our wealth, for in that we do not excel. It has not been our learning—we do not make any show of it. It has not been our tasteful services, the beauty of our music, or the sweetness of our chants.

No, we do not care about such things, but cultivate simplicity. Our crown has been this one thing—that if there has been a Church in Christendom which has given itself to winning souls, this Church has done so. Our ministry has aimed always at this—the plucking of the brands from burning, the bringing of sinners out of darkness into marvelous light. And I do you nothing but simple justice, my Brethren, when I say that by far the larger part of this Church is really alive for soul-winning. It does my heart good to meet with different knots of Brethren among you who everywhere about this city are working away unostentatiously but successfully in bringing souls to Christ. I hope it always will be so. Hold fast, O Church, what you have, that no man take your crown! Let it always be our joy and glory that God gives us spiritual children and souls are born to Him.

Now we desire to do this, and I am sure we do, but we must look more to intercession for the souls of the unconverted. Pray first, for this is the most essential thing to do. What can you and I alone do in the conversion of a man? We cannot chance his heart! We cannot put life into him—we might as well think to create a soul within the ribs of death! It is God’s work to regenerate souls. What then? If I am to be His instrument in doing it, my very first action must be to fall on my knees and pray, “O God, work with me.” You are going to your Sunday school this afternoon, or you are off to your street preaching. Now, if you could do the work, I would not urge you to waste time in asking God to do what you could do alone! But, as you are utterly powerless to win a single soul to Jesus without the Spirit of God, let your first action be to pray, “O Divine power, come and clothe me! O tongue of fire, be given to me, and sacred, rushing, mighty Wind, come forth to breathe life upon dead souls!” Prayer is the most essential thing in turning sinners from the error of their ways.

Then intercessory prayer will fit you for becoming God’s instrument. If I pray for a person’s conversion, especially if I single out some individual, then my heart gets warmed into love to that individual as I think over his position and condition in prayer. Very well, that instructs me, and helps me to deal out the proper word to him when I come near to him. I am like a surgeon, who, coming to a case where he has to use the knife, knows exactly where every bone is and also what part has been injured. My prayer has given me a diagnosis of the man’s state. I have looked it through and considered it in my petitions, and when I come practically to work upon him, I shall be wise, by the Spirit of God, to do the right thing and in the right way.

If we wished to send a man to college to make him a good helper to troubled hearts, we should send him to the college of all-prayer, for intercession is the mode to become wise in winning souls! And, Brethren, prayer will have this effect upon you—that you will go to work hopefully. It is a very horrible thing to think of persons being buried alive, put underground by their friends in their coffins while yet there was breath in their bodies. Let us mind that we never bury a soul alive—I am afraid we are in the habit of doing it. We judge of such an one that he will never be converted—it is a case, we say, where all effort would be useless. We think of another person that he is so abandoned we may very well give him up and attend to more hopeful cases.

In all this we are wrong, since we have no right to sign a soul’s death warrant, or to say to the Grace of God, “to here You may come but no further.” Believe that as long as a man lives in this world there are possibilities of Grace for him! Take him in your arms before God in prayer—and when you begin to pray for him you will feel that there is hope—and you will afterwards converse with him in a hopeful and, perhaps, believing manner. I do not believe a man was ever saved by another one talking to him in a tone of despair, but the cheerful utterance of hopeful love wins its way. Believe that the hard heart may be broken, the blasphemer’s tongue cleansed, the persecutor’s mind changed and that the rebel may yet obey Christ Crucified and become a bright star in the Heaven of God.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, I pray you, then, since the power is of God, and since intercession will make you fit to be used by God, and since also it will give you great hopefulness with regard to those you deal with— exercise yourselves much more than ever in intercessory prayer. This is a work in which all of you can aid. If I came to you this morning and said, “Brothers and Sisters, the Lord’s cause requires money,” I know, from long experience, that you would do your best. But there are some who would be compelled to reply, “The necessities of my family do not permit my doing anything in that direction.” But, when we ask for intercession, no Christian can say, “I cannot plead with God.” If I were to press upon you at this moment the need of more public preaching, many of my congregation would be justly excused, for they are slow of speech and without gifts of utterance.

But, O Brothers and Sisters, when it comes to interceding you can all fulfill the office! And by so doing you can have a share in all the great works of the Church. I have heard of a holy woman who used to say, “I cannot preach but I can help my minister to do it by my prayers. Therefore, whenever I see him come into the pulpit I will pray that God will bless his word, and so I shall have a share in what he does.” When you hear of a missionary working anywhere abroad, pray for him, and then you will become his co-worker. Beloved, some of you are often sickly in body and during the weary night you get but little sleep—do you know why the Lord keeps you awake? It is that while others of us are sleeping you may be praying for us!

God must have some to keep the night watches! He determines that a guard of prayer shall be set around His Church all day and all night long—you are the sentries of the night watches. You cannot do anything else, but you can pray—and by praying you can obtain a share in the noblest works of the Church! Now mark—David, by implication, tells us that some of those we pray for may, perhaps, not care for our prayers and they may come into great calamities through their sins. Then is our time when we should be yet more earnest in intercession for them! If I have spoken to an ungodly man for many years and he has ridiculed all I have said, then I will resolve within myself, “I will never leave off praying for him. Perhaps one of these days I shall find him sick, and then he will ask for the prayers he now rejects. Perhaps I shall find him with a broken heart, and then the words he now jests at will be very sweet to his taste.”

You who seek after souls must know how to keep up the chase—those who are short of breath in soul-winning will never be successful. Follow them up! Follow them up! Follow them to the gates of the grave! If they are not saved after 20 years of prayer, follow them up to the gates of Hell! If they once pass those gates your prayers are unallowable and unavailing, but to the very verge of the infernal Pit follow then—follow them with your prayers. If they will not hear you speak, they cannot prevent your praying. Do they jest at your exhortations? They cannot disturb you at your prayers, for they do not know when you offer them. Are they far away so that you cannot reach them? Your prayers can reach them! You can still bless them. Have they declared that they will never listen to you again, nor see your face? Never mind, God has a voice which they must hear— speak to Him, and He will make them feel.

Though they now treat you despitefully, rendering evil for your good, follow them, follow them, follow them with your prayers! Never let them perish for need of your supplications. The time may come when those who have been longest in yielding their hearts to Christ will repay us a thousand-fold for all the efforts and supplications we may put forth. I have sometimes seen a great sinner, when he is saved, become of as much use as 20 ordinary converts, for in proportion as he was hard to win, he has become useful when won. We do not expect that we shall get Sauls every day made into Pauls, but when it is so, then the Church is rich, indeed, for one Paul is worth a thousand ordinary Believers! These deep sea pearls are precious. These difficult cases may turn out to be Pauls—therefore be instant in season and out of season—praying for them till they are brought to Christ.

The one thing I desire this morning is that my dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ should pledge themselves to be more importunate in prayer for sinners all around us. Like Abraham, a great city is before us—let us plead for it! Like Moses, we dwell among a sinful people—let us stand in the gap for them I charge every member of this Church, by his fealty to God, if, indeed, he is not a liar in the profession that he has made, to pray importunately for the ungodly that they may be brought to Jesus! Plead with Jehovah! Plead—He loves your prayers—your intercessions are like the sweet incense upon the golden altar. Plead with Him and you shall live to see a reward for your pleadings in the conversion of the sons of men! Go home and make your children the special objects of this afternoon’s cries. Implore the Lord to save your husbands or your wives, your kinsfolk and your nearest neighbors.

Implore a blessing upon the seat-holders and hearers of this congregation who remain unregenerate! Then take your streets, take the district in which you live and entreat a gracious visitation—you shall never lack for persons to pray for—therefore continue in supplication. It was but a few days ago I saw four husbands who were converted to God, but their wives were left outside the Church. And those four Brothers, probably all here this morning, met together in prayer for their wives’ conversion—and on the first communion Sunday of last month the four wives were brought in in answer to the prayers of the four husbands!

Anything is possible! Everything is possible to him that believes! God help us to believe and to intercede, and then may He send His benediction, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

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DAVID’S PRAYER IN THE CAVE  
NO. 2282

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, NOVEMBER 13, 1892. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, MAY 18, 1890.

**“Maschil of David; A Prayer when he was in the cave.” Title of Psalm 142.**

“A PRAYER when he was in the cave.” David prayed when he was in the cave. If he had prayed half as much when he was in the palace as he did when he was in the cave, it would have been better for him. But, alas, when he was king, we find him rising from his bed in the

 evening, looking from the roof of the house, and falling into temptation. If he had been looking up to Heaven—if his heart bad been in communion with God—he might never have committed that great crime which has so deeply stained his whole character.

“A prayer when he was in the cave.” God will hear prayer on land, on the sea and even under the sea. I remember a Brother, when in prayer, making use of that last expression. Somebody who was at the Prayer Meeting was rather astonished at it and asked, “How would God hear prayer under the sea?” On enquiry, we found out that the man who uttered those words was a diver and often went down to the bottom of the sea after wrecks. And he said that he had held communion with God while he had been at work in the depths of the ocean. Our God is not only the God of the hills, but of the valleys, also! He is God of both sea and land. He heard Jonah when the disobedient Prophet was at the bottom of the mountains and the earth with her bars seemed to be about him forever. Wherever you work, you can pray! Wherever you lie sick, you can pray! There is no place to which you can be banished where God is not near—and there is no time of day or night when His Throne is inaccessible!

“A prayer when he was in the cave.” The caves have heard the best prayers. Some birds sing best in cages. I have heard that some of God’s people shine brightest in the dark. There is many an heir of Heaven who never prays so well as when he is driven by necessity to pray. Some shall sing aloud upon their beds of sickness, whose voices were hardly heard when they were well. And some shall sing God’s high praises in the fire, who did not praise Him as they should before the trial came. In the furnace of affliction the saints are often seen at their best! If any of you tonight are in dark and gloomy positions—if your souls are bowed down within you—may this become a special time for peculiarly prevalent communion and intercession! And may the prayer of the cave be the very best of your prayers!

I shall, tonight, use David’s prayer in the cave to represent the prayers of godly men in trouble. But, first, I will talk of it as a picture of the condition of a soul under a deep sense of sin. This Psalm of the cave has a great likeness to the character of a man under a sense of sin. I shall then use it to represent the condition of a persecuted Believer. And, thirdly, I shall speak of it as revealing the condition of a Believer who is being prepared for greater honor and wider service than he has ever attained before.

I. First, let me try and use this Psalm as a picture of THE CONDITION OF A SOUL UNDER A DEEP SENSE OF SIN.  
A little while ago you were out in the open field of the world, sinning with a high hand, plucking the flowers which grow in those poisoned vales, and enjoying their deadly perfume. You were as happy as your sinful heart could be, for you were giddy, careless and thoughtless—but it has pleased God to arrest you. You have been apprehended by Christ and you have been put in prison—and now your feet are fast in the stocks. Tonight you feel like one who has come out of the bright sunshine and balmy air into a dark, noisome cavern where you can see but little, where there is no comfort, and where there appears to you to be no hope of escape.  
Well, now, according to the Psalm before us, which is meant for you as well as for David, your first business should be to appeal to God. I know your doubts. I know your fears of God. I know how frightened you are at the very mention of His name, but I charge you, if you would come out of your present gloom, go to God at once! See, the Psalm begins, “I cried unto the Lord with my voice; with my voice unto the Lord did I make my supplication.” Get home and cry to God with your voice; but if you have no place where you can use your voice, cry to God in silence—only cry to Him! Look Godward. if you look any other way, all is darkness. Look Godward. There, and only there, is hope. “But I have sinned against God,” you say. But God is ready to pardon—He has provided a great Atonement through which He can justly forgive the greatest offenses. Look Godward and begin to pray!  
I have known men who have hardly believed in God, do this, but they have had some faint desire to do so and they have cried. It has been a poor prayer and yet God has heard it. I have known some cry to God in despair. When they hardly believed that there could be any use in it, still it was that or nothing, and they knew that it could not hurt them to pray and so they took to their knees and they cried. It is wonderful what poor prayers God will hear, and answer, too! Prayers that have no legs to run with and no hands to grasp with, and very little heart, but still, God has heard them and He has accepted them. Get to your knees, you who feel yourselves guilty! Get to your knees if your hearts are sighing on account of sin! If the dark gloom of your iniquities is gathering about you, cry to God and He will hear you!  
The next thing to do is make a full confession. David says, “I poured out my complaint before Him; I showed before Him my trouble.” The human heart longs to express itself. An unuttered grief will lie and smolder in the soul till its black smoke puts out the very eyes of the spirit. It is not a bad thing, sometimes, to speak to some Christian friend about the anguish of your heart. I would not encourage you to put that in the first place—far from it—but still, it may be helpful to some. But, anyway, make a full confession unto the Lord. Tell Him how you have sinned. Tell Him how you have tried to save yourself and broken down. Tell Him what a wretch you are, how changeable, how fickle, how proud, how wanton, how your ambition carries you away like an unbridled steed! Tell Him all your faults, as far as you can remember them. Do not attempt to hide anything from God—you cannot do it, for He knows all. Therefore, hesitate not to tell Him everything—the darkest secret—the sin you would not wish, even, to whisper to the evening’s gale. Tell it all! Tell it all!  
Confession to God is good for the soul. “Whoever confesses and forsakes his sins shall have mercy.” I press upon any of you who are now in the gloomy cave, that you seek a secret and quiet place and, alone with God, pour out your heart before Him. David says, “I showed before Him my trouble.” Do not think that the use of pious words can be of any use— it is not merely words that you have to utter—you have to lay all your trouble before God. As a child tells its mother its griefs, tell the Lord all your griefs, your complaints, your miseries, your fears! Tell them all out and great relief will come to your spirit! So, first, appeal to God. Secondly, make confession to Him.  
Thirdly, acknowledge to God that there is no hope for you but in His mercy. Put it as David did, “I looked on my right hand and beheld, but there was no man that would know me.” There is but one hope for you— acknowledge that. Perhaps you have been trying to be saved by your good works. They are altogether worthless when you heap them together. Possibly you expect to be saved by your religiousness. Half of it is hypocrisy— how can a man hope to be saved by his hypocrisy? Do you hope to be saved by your feelings? What are your feelings? As changeable as the weather! A puff of wind will change all your fine feelings into murmuring and rebellion against God! Oh, Friend, you cannot keep the Law of God! That is the only other way to Heaven. The perfect keeping of God’s Commandments would save you if you had never committed a sin! But, having sinned, even that will not save you, now, for future obedience will not wipe out past disobedience. Here, in Christ Jesus, whom God sets forth as a Propitiation for sin, is the only hope for you! Lay hold on it. In the cave of your doubts and fears, with the clinging dampness of your despair about you, chilled and numbed by the dread of the wrath to come, yet venture to make God in Christ your only confidence—and you shall yet have perfect peace!  
Then, further, if you are still in the cave of doubt and sin, venture to plead with God to set you free. You cannot present a better prayer than this one of David in the cave, “Bring my soul out of prison that I may praise Your name.” You are in prison tonight and you cannot get out of it by yourself. You may get a hold of those bars and try to shake them to and fro, but they are fast in their sockets—they will not break in your hands. You may meditate, think, invent contemplate, but you cannot open that great iron gate! But there is a hand that can break gates of brass and there is a power that can cut in sunder bars of iron! O man in the iron cage, there is a hand that can crumble up your cage and set you free! You need not be a prisoner. You need not be shut up. You may walk at will through Jesus Christ the Savior! Only trust Him and believingly pray that prayer, tonight, “Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Your name,” and He will set you free! Ah, sinners praise God’s name when they get out of prison! I remember how, when I was set free, I felt like singing all the time and I could quite well use the language of Dr. Watts— *“Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing  
My great Redeemer’s praise!”*  
My old friend, Dr. Alexander Fletcher, seems to rise before me now, for I remember hearing him say to the children that when men came out of prison, they did praise him who had set them free. He said that he was going down the Old Bailey one day and he saw a boy standing on his head, turning cartwheels, dancing and jumping about in all manner of ways, and he said to the boy, “What are you doing? You seem to be tremendously happy.” And the boy replied, “Ah, old gentleman, if you had been locked up six months and had just got out, you would be happy, too!” I have no doubt that is very true. When a soul gets out of a far worse prison than there ever was at Newgate, then he must praise “Free Grace and dying love,” and, “ring those charming bells,” again, and again, and again, and make his whole life musical with the praise of the emancipating Christ!

Now, that is my advice to you who are in the cave through soul-trouble. May God bless it to you! You need not notice anything else that I am going to say tonight. If you are under a sense of sin, heed well what I have been saying, and let other people have the rest of the sermon that belongs more especially to them.  
II. I pass on to my second point. This Psalm may well help to set forth THE CONDITION OF A PERSECUTED BELIEVER.  
A persecuted Believer? Are there any such nowadays? Ah, dear Friends, there are many such! When a man becomes a Christian, he straightway becomes different from the rest of his fellows. When I lived in a street, I was standing, one day, at the window, meditating what my sermon should be, and I could not find a text, when, all of a sudden, I saw a flight of birds. There was a canary which had escaped from its cage and was flying over the slates of the opposite houses—and it was being chased by some 20 sparrows and other rough birds. I thought of that text, “My heritage is unto me as a speckled bird; the birds round about are against her.” Why, they seemed to say to one another, “Here is a yellow fellow! We have not seen the likes of him in London. He has no business here—let us pull off his bright coat—let us kill him, or make him as dark and dull as ourselves.” That is just what men of the world try to do with Christians! Here is a godly man who works in a factory, or a Christian girl who is occupied in folding books, or some other work where there is a large number employed—such persons will have a sad tale to tell of how they have been hunted about, ridiculed and scoffed at by ungodly companions. Now you are in the cave.  
It may be that you are in the condition described here and you hardly know what to do. You are as David was when he wrote the third verse, “When my spirit was overwhelmed within me.” The persecutors have so turned against you and it is so new a thing to you as a young Believer, that you are quite perplexed and hard put to it to know what you should do. They are so severe, they are so ferocious, they are so incessant! And they discover your tender points and they know how to touch you on the raw places that you really do not know what to do! You are like a lamb in the midst of wolves—you know not which way to turn. Well, then, say to the Lord, as David did, “When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then You knew my path.” God knows exactly where you are and what you have to bear. Have confidence that when you know not what to do, He can and will direct your ways if you trust Him!  
In addition to that, it may be that you are greatly tempted. David said, “They privately laid a snare for me.” It is often so with young men in a warehouse, or with a number of clerks in an establishment. They find that a young fellow has become a Christian and they try to trip him up. If they can, they will get up some scheme by which they can make him appear to have been guilty, even if he is not. Ah, you will need much wisdom! I pray God that you may never yield to temptation, but may hold your ground by Divine Grace. Young Christian soldiers often have a very rough time of it in the barracks, but I hope that they will prove themselves true soldiers and not yield an inch to those who would lead them astray.  
It will be very painful if, in addition to that, your friends turn against you. David said, “There was no man that would know me.” Is it so with you? Are your father and mother against you? Is your wife or your husband against you? Do your brothers and sisters call you “a canting hypocrite”? Do they call you a “Methodist,” or a “Presbyterian,” not knowing, themselves, the meaning of the words? Do they point the finger of scorn at you when you get home? And often, when you go from the Lord’s Table, where you have been so happy, do you have to hear an oath the first thing when you enter the door? I know that it is so with many of you. The Church of Christ in London is like Lot in Sodom. In this particular neighborhood, especially, it is hard for Christian people to live at all. You cannot walk down the streets anywhere without having your ears assailed with filthy language—and your children cannot be permitted to run these streets because of the abominable impurity that is, on every hand, round about us.  
Things are growing worse with us, instead of better. They who look for brighter times must be looking with their eyes shut. There is grave occasion for Christians to pray for young people who are converted in such a city as this, for their worst enemies are often those of their own household. “I should not mind so much,” says one, “if I had a Christian friend to fly to. I spoke to one the other day and he did not seem to interest himself in me at all.” I will tell you what hurts a young convert. Here is one just saved. He has really, lovingly, given his heart to Christ and the principal or manager where he works is a Christian. He finds himself ridiculed and he ventures to say a word to this Christian. He snuffs him out in a moment! He has no sympathy with him. Well, there is another old professing Christian working near at the same bench and so the young convert begins to tell him a little about his trouble, but he is very grumpy and Cross.  
I have noticed some Christian people who appear to be shut up in themselves and they do not seem to notice the troubles of beginners in the Divine Life. Let it not be so among you! My dear Brothers and Sisters, cultivate great love to those who, having come into the army of Christ, are much beset by adversaries! They are in the cave. Do not disown them— they are trying to do their best—stand side by side with them. Say, “I, too, am a Christian. If you are honoring that young man with your ridicule, let me have my portion of it! If you are pouring contempt upon him, give me a share of it, for I, also, believe as he believes.”  
Will you do that? Some of you will, I am sure. Will you stand by the man of God who vindicates the Lord’s revealed Truths? Some of you will, but there are plenty of fellows who want to keep a whole skin on their body, and if they can sneak away out of any fight for the right, they are glad to get home and go to bed—and there slumber till the battle is over. God help us to have more of the lion in us and not so much of the cur! God grant us Grace to stand by those who are out and out for God and for His Christ, that we may be remembered with them in the day of His appearing!  
It may be that the worst point about you is that you feel very feeble. You say, “I should not mind the persecution if I felt strong, but I am so feeble.” Well, now, always distinguish between feeling strong and being strong. The man who feels strong is weak! The man who feels weak is the man who is strong! Paul said, “When I am weak, then am I strong.” David prays, “Deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I.” Just hide yourself away in the strength of God. Pray much. Take God for your refuge and your portion. Have faith in Him and you will be stronger than your adversaries. They may seem to pull you over, but you will soon be up again. They may set before you puzzles that you cannot solve. They may come up with their scientific knowledge and you may be at a discount— but never mind that—the God who has led you into the cave will turn the tables for you one of these days! Only hold on and hold out, even to the end.  
I am rather glad that there should be some trouble in being a Christian, for it has become such a very general thing, now, to profess to be one. If I am right, it is going to be a very much less common thing than it is now for a man to say, “I am a Christian.” There will come times when there will be sharp lines drawn. Some of us will help to draw them if we can, when men shall not wear the Christian garb, but bear the Christian name and act like worldlings, and love the amusements and the follies of worldlings. It is time that there was a division in the House of the Lord and that the “ayes” went into one lobby, and the “nays” into the other lobby. We have too long been mixed together! And I, for one, say, may the day soon come when every Christian will have to run the gauntlet! It will be a good thing for genuine Believers. It will blow some of the chaff away from the wheat. We shall have all the purer gold when the fire gets hot and the crucible is put into it, for then the dross will be separated from the precious metal. Be of good courage, my Brothers and Sisters, if you are now in the cave— the Lord will bring you out of it in His own good time!  
III. Now, to close, I want to speak a little about THE CONDITION OF A BELIEVER WHO IS BEING PREPARED FOR GREATER HONOR AND WIDER SERVICE.  
Is it not a curious thing that whenever God means to make a man great, He always first breaks him in pieces? There was a man whom the Lord meant to make into a prince. How did He do it? Why, He met him one night and wrestled with him! You always hear about Jacob’s wrestling. Well, I dare say he did, but it was not Jacob who was the principal wrestler—“There wrestled a man with Him until the breaking of the day.” God touched the hollow of Jacob’s thigh and put it out of joint before He called him “Israel,” that is, “a Prince of God.” The wrestling was to take all his strength out of him and when his strength was gone, then God called him a prince. Now, David was to be king over all Israel. What was the way to Jerusalem for David? What was the way to the throne? Well, it was round by the cave of Adullam. He must go there and be an outlaw and an outcast, for that was the way by which he would be made king. Have none of you ever noticed, in your own lives, that whenever God is going to give you an enlargement and bring you out to a larger sphere of service, or a higher platform of spiritual life, you always get thrown down? That is His usual way of working! He makes you hungry before He feeds you! He strips you before He robes you! He makes nothing of you before He makes something of you! This was the way with David. He is to be king in Jerusalem, but He must go to the throne by the way of the cave. Now, are any of you here going to Heaven, or going to a more heavenly state of sanctification, or going to a greater sphere of usefulness? Do not wonder if you go by the way of the cave. Why is that?

It is, first, because if God would make you greatly useful, He must teach you how to pray! The man who is a great preacher and yet cannot pray, will come to a bad end. A woman who cannot pray and yet is noted for the conducting of Bible classes, has already come to a bad end. If you can be great without prayer, your greatness will be your ruin! If God means to bless you greatly, He will make you pray greatly, as He does David who says in this part of his preparation for coming to his throne, “I cried unto the Lord with my voice: with my voice unto the Lord did I make my supplication.”  
Next, the man whom God would greatly honor must always believe in God when he is at his wits’ end. “When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then You knew my path.” Are you never at your wits’ end? God has not sent you to do business in great waters, for, if He has, you will reel to and fro and be at your wits’ end, in a great storm, before long! Oh, it is easy to trust when you can trust yourself, but when you cannot trust yourself—when you are dead beat, when your spirit sinks below zero in the chill of utter despair—then is the time to trust in God. If that is your case, you have the marks of a man who can lead God’s people and be a comforter of others.  
Next, in order to greater usefulness, many a man of God must be taught to stand alone. “I looked on my right hand, and behold, but there was no man that would know me.” If you need men to help you, you may make a very decent follower. But if you need no man and can stand alone, God being your Helper, you shall be helped to be a leader. Oh, it was a grand thing when Luther stepped out from the ranks of Rome! There were many good men round him who said, “Be quiet, Martin. You will get burnt if you do not hold your tongue! Let us keep where we are, in the Church of Rome, even if we have to swallow down great lumps of dirt. We can believe the Gospel and still remain where we are.” But Luther knew that he must defy Antichrist and declare the pure Gospel of the blessed God! And he must stand alone for the Truth of God even if there were as many devils against him as there were tiles on the housetops at Worms! That is the kind of man whom God blesses! I would to God that many a young man here might have the courage to feel, in his particular position, “I can stand alone, if need be. I am glad to have my master and my fellow workmen with me, but if nobody will go to Heaven with me, I will say farewell to them and go to Heaven alone through the Grace of God’s dear Son.”  
Once more, the man whom God will bless must be the man who delights in God alone. David says, “I cried unto You, O Lord: I said, You are my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.” Oh, to have God as our refuge and to make God our portion! “You will lose your job! You will lose your income. You will lose the approbation of your fellow men.” “Ah,” says the Believer, “but I shall not lose my Portion, for God is my Portion! He is job, and income, and everything to me—and I will hold by Him, come what may.” If you have learned to “delight yourself in the Lord, He will give you the desires of your heart.” Now you are come into such a state that God can use you and make much of you—but until you make much of God, He never will make much of you! God deliver us from having our portion in this life, for, if we have, we are not among His people at all!  
He whom God would use must be taught sympathy with God’s poor people. Hence we get these words of David, in the sixth verse, “I am brought very low.” Mr. Greatheart, though he must be strong to kill Giant Grim and any others of the giants that infest the Pilgrim path, must be a man who has gone that road himself if he is to be a leader of others. If the Lord means to bless you, my Brother, and to make you very useful in His Church, depend upon it, He will try you. Half, perhaps nine-tenths of the trials of God’s ministers are not sent to them on their own account. They are sent for the good of other people. Many a child of God who goes very smoothly to Heaven, does very little for others. But another of the Lord’s children who has all the ins and outs and changes of an experienced Believer’s life, has them only that he may be better fitted to help others! That he may be able to sit down and weep with them that weep, or to stand up and rejoice with them that rejoice.  
So then, dear Brothers who have got into the cave, and you, my Sisters, who have deep spiritual exercises, I want to comfort you by showing you that this is God’s way of making something of you. He is digging you out! You are like an old ditch—you cannot hold any more—and God is digging you out to make more room for more Grace. That spade will cut sharply and dig up sod after sod, and throw it to one side. The very thing you would like to keep shall be cast away and you shall be hollowed out, and dug out, that the word of Elisha may be fulfilled, “Make this valley full of ditches. For thus says the Lord, You shall not see wind, neither shall you see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water.” You are to be tried, my Friend, that God may be glorified in you!  
Lastly, if God means to use you, you must get to be full of praise. Listen to what David says, “Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Your name: the righteous shall compass me about; for You shall deal bountifully with me.” May God give to my Brothers and Sisters here, who are being tried for their good and afflicted for their promotion, Grace to begin to praise Him! It is the singers that go before—they who can praise best shall be fit to lead others in the work. Do not set me to follow a gloomy leader. Oh, no, dear Sirs, we cannot work to the tune of “The Dead March in Saul”! Our soldiers would never have won Waterloo if that had been the music for the day of battle! No, no! Give us a rejoicer—“Sing unto the Lord who has triumphed gloriously; praise His great name again and again.” Draw the sword and strike home! If you are of a cheerful spirit, glad in the Lord and joyous after all your trials and afflictions, and if you can rejoice more because you have been brought so low, then God is making something of you and He will yet use you to lead His people to greater works of Grace!  
I have talked to three kinds of people tonight. May God grant each of you Grace to take what belongs to you! But if you see any of the first sort before you go out of the building—any who are in the cave of gloom under a sense of sin—if you want to go to the communion, but feel that you ought to stop and comfort them, mind that you do the latter! Put yourself second! There is a wonderful work to be done in those lobbies and in those pews after a service. There are some dear Brothers and Sisters who are always doing it—they call themselves my, “dogs”—for they go and pick up the birds that I have wounded! I wish that they might be able to pick up many tonight. Oh, that some of you might always be on the alert to watch a face and see whether there is any emotion there! Just paddle your own canoe alongside that little ship and see whether you cannot get into communication with the poor troubled one on board and say a word to cheer a sad heart. Always be doing this, for if you are in prison, yourself, the way out of it is to help another out! God turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends. When we begin to look after others and seek to help others, God will bless us. So may it be, for His name’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON **PSALM 57.**

To the chief Musician, Al-Taschith, Michtaim of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave. This is one of the “Destroy not” Psalms, for that is the meaning of the title, Al-Taschith, which is used here, and in Psalms 58, 59 and 75. Michtaim of David. David’s golden Psalm, “when he fled from Saul in the cave.” In this Psalm we see the calmness of David’s heart when he was in great peril. He was a man of peace and to be hunted cruelly, as he was by Saul, greatly pained him. Yet with all the sensitiveness of his nature, he did not fall into unbelief, for his sensitiveness was balanced by his confidence in his God. You will see how, greatly as he was afflicted, he was greatly strengthened.

Verse 1. Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me. He pleads twice, for his was an urgent case. He would have the Lord help him at once, for, perhaps, if the Lord’s mercy came not to him at once, it would be too late. So he cried, “Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me.”

1. For my soul trusts in You This is the feather on the arrow of prayer that guides it straight to the heart of God! This is the condition attached to the promise, “According to your faith be it unto you.” If you can truly plead that your soul is trusting in God, you may be assured that He will not deny you His mercy.

1. Yes, in the shadow of Your wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities are overpast. What a sweet realization there is, here, of the power of God to protect him! Just as the little chick hides beneath the mother’s wing and knows no fear, so says David, “in the shadow of Your wings will I make my refuge.” There was no refuge to be seen, but David does not ask to see—an unseen God is all that faith needs. If it is only a shadow, yet the shadow of Jehovah’s wings is substantial enough for our confidence—“In the shadow of Your wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities are overpast.” They will be overpast—the worst calamity will not last forever. We shall think differently of these rough times, byand-by. We ought not to give up in despair and cast away our confidence while we are in the thick of the fight. Until the calamities are overpast, it should be our joy to run under God’s protecting wings and hide ourselves securely there.

2. I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performs all things for me. Faith is never dumb. True faith is a crying faith. If you have a confidence in God of such a kind that you do not need to pray, get rid of it! For it is of no use to you—it is a false confidence, it is presumption! Only a crying faith will be a prevailing faith. “I will cry unto God most high”—the very height and sublimity of God is an attraction to faith, for though He is so high, He can and will stoop. Though God is so high, He can lift me up above the storm, for He is above it, Himself, and He can set me above it, too. “I will cry unto God most high” and David sweetly adds, “unto God that performs for me.” The translators have inserted the words, “all things,” and very properly, too. But David leaves, as it were, a gap, so that we may fill in anything that we please. Thus do we—

*“Sing the sweet promise of His Grace,  
And the performing God.”*

He is not one who gives us promises and then puts us off without the thing promised—but He fulfils the promises He has made—He is the Faithful Promiser! “God that performs for me.”

3. He shall send from Heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. If He cannot find any means upon earth for saving David, He will send from Heaven to do it, but He will save him. God is sure to find an ark for His Noahs if the floods should cover the whole earth. And when they cannot be preserved any longer on the earth, He will take them away to Himself in Heaven, but He will surely take care of His own—“He shall send from Heaven, and save me.” If there were only one of His people in danger, He would rend the heavens in order to save him— “He shall send from Heaven and save me,” not only from the danger to my life, but from danger to my character—“from the reproach of him that would swallow me up.” Often, the enemies of the righteous are so fierce and cruel that they would, like some huge python, swallow up the godly man, devour him, make an end of him, make one meal of him if they could. But God will not allow them to do so. He will send from Heaven and deliver us from the reproach of them that would swallow us up.

3. God shall send forth His mercy and His truth. The Psalmist had only prayed for mercy. Twice he had said, “Be merciful unto me.” But God always answers us more largely than we ask in our prayers. He does exceeding abundantly above what we ask or even think. So His truth comes with His mercy, as a double guard to protect His people—“God shall send forth His mercy and His truth.”

4. My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword. Yet, notice that David says, “I lie,” there. That is the emphatic word and the force of that word conveys this idea, “I recline there. I feel at ease, notwithstanding the danger of my position. I recline, and rest, even among them that are set on fire.” Oh, the calm confidence of the faith that forgets the adversary when once she has hidden herself under the shadow of Jehovah’s wings! The description given of ungodly persecutors is very strong—“whose teeth are spears and arrows.” Their mouth seems to contain deadly armory—they have no molars to grind their food, they are all canine teeth, cruel, cutting. You must know some such critical spirits that seem to be all teeth, and whose every tooth is a spear or an arrow. But their tongue is worse than their teeth, for it is not only a sword, but, “a sharp sword,” a sharpened sword. Oh, how tongues will cut and wound! You may heal the cut of a sword, but who shall heal the cut of a deadly, cruel, malicious, slanderous tongue? Yet for all that, David was not dismayed, but he said, “I lie down among such men, my soul is among lions.” Like Daniel among the lions, so does this man of God take his night’s rest as calmly as though he were sleeping in his own bed at home.

5. Be You exalted, O God, above the heavens; let Your glory be above all the earth. David so rises above his present circumstances that he begins to praise his God. O Beloved, there is no condition in which God ought to be robbed of a song! What if I am sick? Yet my Lord must have my music, even if the harp strings are not well tuned. What if I am poor? Yet why should I be poor towards Him and deny Him my need of praise? What if I am busy? Yet I must still find time for praising Him. How sweetly David seeks to exalt and glorify his God, “Be You exalted, O God, above the heavens; let Your glory be above all the earth.”

6. They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have dug a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves. They hunted him as they spread a snare for a bird, or as they sought to entrap a wild beast by digging a pit and covering it over that he might stumble into it. David scarcely has time to tell us of their devices before he discovers that their plans have come to nothing—“they have dug a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves.” You may go calmly on, my persecuted Friend, for those who seek to hurt the righteous will only hurt themselves—their bows shall be broken, their arrows shall fall back into their own bosoms! Only be still and let the wicked alone—let God fight for you—and you hold your peace.

7. My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise. That is enough for me, I will not stop my singing for all my adversaries. Let them howl like lions, I will sing on! Let them dig their pits, I will sing on! I find this my best employment, to keep on praising my God—

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

8. Awake, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early. My tongue, the glory of my frame, be not silent! Bestir yourself! “I myself will awake early,” or, “I will awake the dawning.” I will call the sun up to be shining! I will bid him wake to shine to the honor of my Lord! With the earliest birds I will make one more singer in the great concert hall of God. I will not need more rest, or a longer time to myself to consider all my troubles—I will give my best time, the first hour of the day, to the praise of my God.

9. I will praise You, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto You among the nations. I will make the Gentiles hear it. They who know not the Lord shall be astonished when they hear me praising Him and they shall ask, “Who is this God of whom this man makes so much?”

10, 11. For Your mercy is great unto the heavens, and Your truth unto the clouds. Be You exulted, O God, above the heavens: let Your glory be above all the earth. God give us that same calm praiseful frame of mind that David possessed if we are called to endure such trials as fell to his lot!

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AT SCHOOL

NO. 1519

DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.  
“Teach me to do Your will; for You are my God.”  
Psalm 143:10.

THIS is a prayer about doing, but it is perfectly free from legal taint. The man who offered it had no idea of being saved by his doings, for in the second verse of the Psalm he had said, “Enter not into judgment with Your servant: for in Your sight shall no man living be justified.” This is not the prayer of a sinner seeking salvation, for salvation is not by doing the will of God but by believing in Christ. It is the prayer of the man who is already saved and who, being saved, devotes himself to the service of God and wishes to be taught in the fear of the Lord. “Teach me to do Your will, O God.” The connection leads us to make the remark that David looked upon the doing of God’s will as his best escape from his enemies.

He speaks of his cruel persecutors. He declares that though he looked all around he could find none who would help him. Then he prays, “Teach me to do Your will; for You are my God.” And depend upon it, the surest way to escape from harm is to do no ill. If you are surrounded by those who would slander you, your best defense is a blameless life! If many are watching for your halting and maliciously desiring your fall, your safety lies in holiness! The very best prayer you can pray for your own protection is, “Teach me to do Your will.” If you do right, none can harm you. This prayer was suggested by the perplexity of the Psalmist’s mind. He was overwhelmed and did not know what to do and, therefore, he cried, “Teach me to do Your will, O God,”

He had come to a place where many roads met and he did not know which path to take and so he prayed God to guide him in the way appointed. I commend this prayer to all who may be sorely puzzled and anxious. You have exercised your own judgment and you have, perhaps, consulted too much with friends and yet your way seems entirely blocked up—resort to God with this as your heart’s prayer, “Teach me to do Your will; for You are my God.” May the Spirit of God now bless us while we open up this short prayer that we may be helped to understand it and use it. First, we will speak upon the prayer. And then, secondly, upon its answer.

I. And, first, THE PRAYER ITSELF—let us notice its character. It is a holy prayer. “Teach me to do Your will.” The man who utters this language desires to be free from sin, for sin can never be God’s will. Under no circumstances, whatever, may I do wrong and fancy that I am doing God’s will! I have read of an extremely poor man who needed fuel for the fire for his children and the text came to his mind, “All things are yours.” Armed with this text, he thought he would take a little wood from his neighbor’s woodpile but, very happily there came to his mind another text, “You shall not steal.” He was quite clear about its meaning and so he left the wood alone. And he remembered, afterward, how that text had saved him from a great transgression.

Depend upon it, whatever circumstances or impressions may seem to say, it is never God’s will that you should do wrong! There are devil’s Providences as well as God’s Providences. When Jonah wanted to go to Tarshish, he found a ship going there and I dare say he said, “How Providential!” Yes, but no Providence can ever be an excuse for sinning against God! We are to do right and, therefore, we pray, “Teach me to do Your will.” It is a humble prayer—the prayer of a man of deep experience and yet, for all that and, perhaps, because of that, a man who felt that he needed teaching as to every step he should take. When you do not need teaching, Brothers and Sisters, it is because you are too stupid to learn— you may depend upon that.

It is only a very young lady fresh from a boarding school who has “finished her education.” And it is only a great fool of a man who thinks that he can learn no more. Those who know themselves best and know the world best and know God best always have the lowest thoughts of themselves. They have no wisdom of their own except this—that they are wise enough to flee from their own wisdom and say to the Lord, “Teach me to do Your will.” This is a holy prayer and a humble prayer and commends itself to every holy and humble heart.

It is, dear Friends, a docile prayer—the prayer of a teachable man. “Teach me to do Your will.” It is not merely, you see, “Teach me your will,” but, “Teach me to do it.” The person is so ignorant that he needs to be taught how to do anything and everything. You may tell a child how to walk, but it will not walk, for all that! You must teach it to walk. You must take it by the arms as God did Ephraim. He says, “I taught Ephraim, also, to go, taking them by their arms,” just as a nurse teaches her little ones. “Teach me to do.” Lord, it is not enough that You teach my head and teach my heart, but teach my hands and my feet. “Teach me to do Your will.”

Such a suppliant is docile and ready to learn. It is an acquiescent prayer, also, which is a great thing in its favor. “Teach me to do Your will—not mine. I will put my will to the side.” He does not say, “Lord, teach me to do part of Your will—that part which pleases me,” but all Your will. If there is any part of Your will which I am not pleased with, for that very reason teach it to me until my whole soul shall be conformed to Your mind and I shall love Your will, not because it happens to be pleasing, but because it is Your will. It is a prayer of resignation and self-abnegation and is, perhaps, one of the highest that the Christian can pray, though it may well befit the learner who stands for the first time at Wisdom’s door.

And then notice that it is a believing prayer—“Teach me to do Your will; for You are my God.” There is faith in God in this claim. “You are my God”—and there is faith in God’s condescension that He will act as a Teacher. Brothers and Sisters, we have two faults. We do not think God to be as great as He is and we do not think God can be so little as He can be. We err on both sides and neither know His height of Glory nor His depth of Grace. We practically say, “This trial is too menial. I will bear it without Him.” We forget that the same God who rules the stars condescends to be a Teacher and teaches us to do His will! We heard, once, of a president of a great nation who, nevertheless, taught in a Sunday school—it was thought to be great condescension—but what shall I say of Him who, while He sits amid the choirs of angels and accepts their praises, comes down to His little children and teaches them to do His will? The prayer before us is very precious, for it is holy, humble, docile, acquiescent and believing.

Let us now notice what the actual request is. In so many words it says, “Teach me to do Your will.” So, Brothers and Sisters, it is a practical prayer. He does not say merely, “Teach me to know Your will”—a very excellent prayer, that—but there are a great many who stick fast in the knowing and do not go on to the doing! These are forgetful hearers deceiving themselves. An ounce of doing is worth a ton of knowing! The most orthodox faith in the world, if it is accompanied by an unholy life, will only increase a man’s damnation. There must be the yielding up of the members and of the mind unto God in obedience, or else the more we know, the greater will be our condemnation!

The Psalmist does not say, “Lord, help me to talk about Your will,” though it is a very proper thing to talk about and a very profitable thing to hear about. But still doing is better than talking. If t’s were w’s there would be more saints in the world than there are. That is to say, if those who talk uprightly would also walk uprightly, it would be well. But with many, the talk is better than the walk. Better a silent tongue than an unclean life! Practical godliness is preferable to the sweetest eloquence. The prayer is, “Teach me to do Your will.”

There are some who long to be taught in all mysteries and, truly, to understand a mystery aright is a great privilege, but their main thought seems to be to know the deep doctrines, the mysterious points. Many go into prophecy and a nice muddle they make when they get there. We have had I do not know how many theories of prophecy, each one of them more absurd than the rest and so it will be, I fear, to the world’s end. Truly, it would be a good thing to understand the prophecies and all knowledge, “and yet show I unto you a more excellent way”—and that excellent way is to live a life of humble, godly dependence and faith and to show forth in your life the love that was in Christ Jesus! Lord, I chiefly long to know Your will to do it—teach me that and I am content.

I have already said that this prayer asks that we may do God’s will, not our own. Oh, how naturally our heart prays, “Lord, let me have my own way.” That is the first prayer of human nature when it is left alone—“Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice? Let me have my own way!” That desire will sometimes enter the Christian’s heart, though I hope it will not long remain there! We may be praying, “Lord, not my will, but Yours be done,” and yet the wicked, rebellious heart may be saying inside, “But let it be my will, Lord! Let it be my will.” Still do we cling to self! May the Lord deliver us from Lord Will-He-Will who is a terrible tyrant wherever he rules! And may this be our prayer, “Teach me to do Your will.”

We are not to ask to do other people’s will, though some persons are always slaves to the wills of others. Whatever their company is, that is what they are. In Rome they do as Rome does—they try to accommodate themselves to their family—they cannot take a stand, or be decided. They are ruled and governed, poor slaves that they are, by their connections. They fear the frown of man! Oh that they would rise to something nobler and pray, “Lord, teach me to do Your will, whether it is the will of the great ones of the earth, or the will of my influential friends, or the will of my loud talking neighbors or not! Help me to do Your will, to take my stand and say, ‘As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.’”

It is a blessed prayer. The more we look at it the more we see in it. What does he mean by doing God’s will? Does he not mean, “Help me to do as Your Word bids me”? For the will of God is put before us very plainly in His Law and, especially, in that Law as viewed in the hands of Christ. “This is the will of God, even our sanctification.” To serve Him devoutly and to love our neighbor as ourselves—this is the will of God. May His Spirit help us. “Teach me to do Your will, O God.” That will also takes the form of Providence. Out of two courses equally right, we sometimes have to ask the question, “Lord, what is Your will here?” There is nothing immoral in either the one or the other and, therefore, our difficulty. And so we go to the Lord and say, “Here is a case in which Your Law does not guide me, otherwise I should decide at once, but will You now show me what You will have me to do?”

In another case the will of God may be suggested by opportunity. Dear Friend, the will of God is that you should speak to that friend sitting near you about soul matters. The will of God is that your unconverted servant should have your prayers and your instruction. God puts men in our way on purpose that we may do them good. I have no doubt whatever that many a Christian is made to go where he would not choose to go and to associate with persons that he would not wish to associate with on purpose—that he may be the means of taking light into dark places and of carrying life from God to dead souls. So if you pray this prayer, “Teach me to do Your will,” and carry it out, you will watch for opportunities of serving the Lord.

The prayer seems, to me, to have all that compass and much more. But I would answer another enquiry. What is the intention of the prayer as to manner? It does not say, “Lord, enable me to do Your will,” but, “Teach me to do Your will,” as if there were some peculiar way of doing it that had to be taught. As when a young man goes apprentice to acquire a trade. Lord, I would put myself under indenture to Your Grace that You may teach me the art and mystery of doing Your will. How, then, ought God’s will to be done? It should be done thoughtfully. A great many Christians are not half as considerate as they should be. We should go through life not flippantly like the butterfly that flits from flower to flower, but like the bee that stays and sucks honey and gathers sweet store for the hive.

We should be seriously in earnest and one point of earnestness should be—  
*“With holy trembling, holy fear,  
To make my calling sure,  
Your utmost counsel to fulfill,  
And suffer all Your righteous will,  
And to the end endure.”*

Lord, help me to do Your will, seriously bending all my soul to the doing of it, not trifling in Your courts, nor making life a play, but loving You with all my understanding! The Lord’s will should be done immediately. As soon as a command is known, it should be obeyed. Lord, suffer me not to consult with flesh and blood. Make me prompt and quick of understanding in the fear of God. Teach me to do Your will as angels do, who no sooner hear Your word than they fly like flames of fire to fulfill Your wishes!

His will should by done cheerfully. Jehovah seeks not slaves to grace His Throne. He would have us delight to do His will, yes, His Law should be in our heart. Oh, Brothers and Sisters, you need to pray this—“Teach me to do Your will,” or else you will miss the mark. Teach me to do it constantly. Let me not sometimes be Your servant and then run away from You. Keep me to it. Let me never weary. When the morning wakes me, may it find me ready and when the evening bids me rest, may I be serving You until I fall asleep. Teach me to do it also, Lord, universally, not some part of it, but all of it—not one of Your commands being neglected—nor one single part of my daily task being left undone. I am Your servant.

Make me to be what a good servant is to her mistress, neglecting none of the cares of the household. May I be watchful in all points. Teach me to do Your will spiritually, not making the outside of cups and platters clean, but obeying You within my soul. May what I do be done with all my heart. If I pray, help me to pray in the Spirit. If I sing, let my heart make music unto You. When I am talking to others about Your name and trying to spread the savor of Jesus, let me not do it in my own strength, or in a wrong spirit, but may the Holy Spirit be upon me. Teach me to do Your will intensely. Let the zeal of Your house eat me up. Oh that I might throw my whole self into it! This little prayer grows, does it not? Pray it, Brothers and Sisters and may the Lord answer you.

Once again, there are necessary qualities which we must seek if we would sincerely pray this prayer, “Teach me to do Your will.” You must have decision of character, for some never do God’s will though they wish they did and they regret, they say, that they cannot—they resolve that they will and there it ends. O you spongy souls! Some of you are sadly squeezable! Whatever hand grips you can shape you. Decision is needed, for you cannot do God’s will unless you know how to say, “No,” and to put your foot down and declare that whatever may happen, you will not turn aside from the service of your God! If the Lord shall teach you to do His will, you will also need courage. The prayer virtually says, “When my enemies ridicule me, teach me to do Your will. When they threaten me, teach me to do Your will. When they tempt me, teach me to do Your will. When they slander me, teach me to do Your will—to be brave with the bravery which resolves to do the right and leaves the issues with God.” “Teach me to do Your will.”

It means—Give me resignation, kill in me my self-hood. Put down, I pray You, my pride. Make me willing to be anything or to do anything You will. It is a prayer that necessitates humility. No man can pray it unless he is willing to stoop and wash the saints’ feet. “Teach me to do Your will.” Let me be a dishwasher in Your kitchen if so I may glorify You. I have no choice but that You be All in All. It is a prayer, too, for spiritual life and much of it, for a dead man cannot do God’s will. Shall the dead praise Him? Shall they that go down to the Pit give Him thanks? Oh, no, Brothers and Sisters! You must be full of life if you are to do God’s will!

Some professors are not quickened one-third of the way yet. I hope they have a measure of quickening, but it does not seem to have reached the extremities. There may be a little quickening in the heart, but it has not quickened the tongue to confess Christ, nor quickened the hands to give to Christ, or to work for Christ. They seem to be half-dead. O Lord, fill me with life from the sole of my feet to the crown of my head, for how can I do Your will unless Your Spirit saturates me through and through, till every pulse is consecrated? I would be wholly Yours. “Teach me to do Your will.”

II. I will not detain you many minutes over the second part of our sermon in which we are to say a little upon ITS ANSWER. There is the prayer, “Teach me to do Your will.” Will it get an answer? Yes, Brothers and Sisters, it will assuredly obtain an answer of peace. For, first, there is a reason for expecting it. “You are my God.” Oh, yes, if we were asking this of someone else, we might fear, but, “You are my God” is a blessed argument because the greater supposes the less! If God has given us Himself, He will give us teaching!

It is also God’s way to teach—“Good and upright is the Lord, therefore will He teach transgressors in the way.” It is a quality of a good man to wish to make others good. It is supremely the quality of the good God to make others good. When I think of what the Lord is, I am certain that He will be willing to teach me to do His will. Moreover, He has promised to do it. “I will instruct you and teach you in the way that you shall go. I will guide you with My eyes.” And, again, He is glorified by so doing, for it brings Glory to God when His people do His will. Therefore I may expect, for all these reasons, that He will teach me to do His will.

Again, dear Friends, it needs to be answered. “Teach me to do Your will. Lord, there is nobody who can ever teach me Your will unless You do it. I shall never learn it by myself. This scholarship I shall never pick up by chance. Lord, unless You hold me fast and teach me with Your supreme art, I shall never learn to do Your will as I desire to learn it.” You see, he turns away from every other teacher to his God. He puts himself to school with God alone. And there is the prayer, “Teach me to do Your will; for You are my God.” Brothers and Sisters, you must have this teaching, or else you will never do God’s will. No strength of nature, no wit of nature can ever suffice to serve the Lord aright—you must be taught from above!

There are many ways in which God gives His answer to this prayer, “Teach me to do Your will.” We have received one wonderful answer to it already. He has given Jesus Christ to be our Example. There is no teaching like actual example! If you want to know the will of God, study the life of Christ! The Lord is pleased to give us fainter copies of that same will of His in His saints. Read the sacred biographies of the Scriptures. Watch the holy lives of those who are among you, who live near to God, and follow them so far as they follow Christ. They are not complete copies—there are blots and blunders—still, the Lord does teach young people by the godly lives of their parents and He instructs all of us by the biographies of devoted men and women.

Again, the Lord teaches us by every line of His Word and oftentimes when that Word is heard, or carefully read, it comes home with great power to the soul and guides us in the way of life. Moreover the Lord has a way of teaching us by His own Spirit. The Holy Spirit speaks in secret whispers to those who are able to hear Him. It is not every professing Christian that has the visitations of the Spirit of God in personal monitions, but there are saints who hear a voice behind them saying, “This is the way, walk in it.” God guides us with His eyes as well as by His Word. Opened eyes can see, in a moment, what the Lord means. He has gentle means. His daily dealings in loving tenderness are guides to us. Every mercy is a star to pilot us to Heaven.

When we are not willing to be guided so easily, He will teach us by rough means. The Lord has a bit and a whip for those who need them. He will restrain us by affliction and infirmity and sometimes chasten us very sorely with losses, bereavements, depression of spirit and the like—in some way or other He will hear the prayer for teaching, for it is a Covenant promise—“All your children shall be taught of the Lord.” Blessed are they to whom the teaching comes sweetly and softly! It can be so if we are willing to have it so, but surely if we will not be tenderly guided, God will make us do His will as men compel the bullock to do their will when it is rebellions under the yoke and must be broken in. The Lord will hear our prayer for instruction, but it may not be quite in the way we would have chosen.

One thing more. I trust we have, all of us who know the Lord, prayed the prayer, “Teach me to do Your will; for You are my God.” Now mind, my dear Friends, mind that you do it sincerely and know what you are doing because after offering such a petition as this, you dare not go into sin! You cannot say, “Teach me to do Your will,” and then go off to frivolous amusements, or spend your evenings in vain and giddy society. That would be an insolent mockery of God! “Teach me to do Your will,” you say, and then get up and do what you know to be clean contrary to His mind and will—what defiant profanity is this! Again, do not offer this prayer with a reserve. Do not say, or mean, “Teach me to do Your will in all points but one. There is a point in which I pray You have me excused.”

I am afraid that certain Believers do not want to learn too much. I have known them not like to read special passages of Scripture. Perhaps they trouble them doctrinally, or as to the ordinances of the Christian faith, or as to matters of Church discipline. If they do not paste those pages together to hide the obnoxious passage, yet they do not like them opened too much. They would rather read a verse which looks more to their mind. But, Brothers and Sisters, if you and a text have a quarrel, make up with it at once! You must not alter the text—alter your creed, alter your life, alter your thought, God the Holy Spirit helping you—for the text is right and you are in the wrong!

“Teach me to do Your will,” means, if we pray it honestly, “I will search God’s Word to know what His mind is.” Why, there are numbers of you who join the Church you were brought up in, whatever it is! You do not take the trouble to examine as to whether your Church is Scriptural or not. This is a blind way of acting! This is not obeying the will of God. Know what God’s Book teaches. Search the Scriptures! Many Christians believe what their minister preaches because he preaches it. Do not believe a word of what I preach unless you can find it in the Word of God. “To the Law and to the Testimony! If we speak not according to this Word it is because there is no light in us.” We are all fallible and though we teach as best we can and hope that God teaches you much by us, yet we are not inspired and do not pretend to be!

Search the Book of God on your own account and abide by what you find there and by nothing else. Where the Bible leads, you are bound to follow and following its guidance you shall not walk in darkness. Seek to know the will of God and when you know it, carry it out and pray the Holy Spirit to take away the dearest idol you have known—the thought that pleases you best—out of your mind if it is contrary to the supreme will of the eternal God! The Lord grant we may thus pray and thus be heard.

Alas, unconverted people cannot pray after the fashion of my text. They have, first of all, to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ before they can do the will of the Lord. May you all be led to believe in the Savior and when you have done so, then may the Holy Spirit lead you to pray, “Teach me to do Your will; for You are may God.” The Lord bless you, for Christ’s sake. Amen.

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON  
DEAR FRIENDS—I had joyfully expected to set out for home next Monday, but flights of letters have come to warn me against returning while an Arctic temperature freezes our native land. Many matters make me anxious to see my dear home and Church, but I submit to the loving advice of my Deacons, which has just reached me by telegram, and I shall abide in this warm retreat for another week, hoping for a change of weather.

Yours heartily,  
*C. H. SPURGEON*  
Mentone, January 31, 1880  
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“HIDING IN YOU!”  
NO. 2930

A SERMON  
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, APRIL 6, 1905.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 14, 1876.

**“I flee unto You to hide me.”  
Psalm 143:9.**

WHAT a great mercy it is for us that David had not a smooth path and an easy life! We would have lost much valuable instruction if he had been able to hold on continually the even tenor of his way. Whereas, now, we are great gainers by his trials and sufferings. In reading the Psalms of David, you will often find a verse which just suits your own case. It is hardly possible for you to be placed in any position without discovering that the son of Jesse has been there before you. I cannot, in all respects, liken him to the Lord Jesus Christ, who was in all points tempted like as we are, yet, to a large extent, it was so with David as well as with “great David’s greater Son.” He seems to have been not merely one man, but “all mankind’s epitome,” and to have known almost all human temptations, human sins and human joys, having been led, sometimes by the Spirit, and sometimes, alas, by his own frailty and foolishness, into all sorts of strange places in order that he might become an instructor to us.

You have probably heard this remark a great many times, but, did it ever strike you that very much the same may be said concerning your own experience? When you are wondering why you are so strangely tried and why your experience is often so remarkable, may it not happen that the reason does not lie in yourself so much as in others to whom God means to make you useful? You are being led along a rough road and being tried and instructed in order that you may be the means of helping others whom you will find in some of the dark places of the earth. You are being trained as a hardy mountaineer in order that when the Lord’s sheep are lost on wild craggy places, you may know how to climb up after them and bring them down to a place of safety. You are being taught how to find your way through the country of despondency and despair in order that when the pilgrims to the Celestial City lose their way and get into the marshy places of fear and doubt, you may know how to bring them out again and set their feet again upon the Rock and establish their goings once more.

The bearing of any one man’s life upon the lives of other men can scarcely be fully known to us here. Even when we are able to look upon the completed life, we shall hardly know how much it has been intertwisted with other men’s lives and, certainly, until the life is completed, no man can know how much his present sufferings have to do with his usefulness to others. Nor can he fully understand how he is being prepared here, there, and in a thousand other places for usefulness in a position of which he little dreams that he will ever be the occupant. Yet he is one day to be placed where all this mysterious training will be of the utmost service to other people. The steel blade that was put into the fire again, and again, and yet again to be tempered, did not know that the Cid would use it in the day of battle to cut through the armor of his adversaries! If it had not been prepared for use in this fashion, it would not have been fit to be placed in such a hero’s hands. Believers are being made into vessels meet for the Master’s use and it is not every vessel that is fit for Him to employ in His Divine service. David was prepared, but he could only have become so by means of the remarkable life of trial through which he was called to pass.

Whenever we read the story of David’s life, or note in the Psalms where he went and what he did, we should not merely notice how David acted and suffered and what he did while undergoing the suffering, but we should try to so study his experience as to be able to do as he did if we are placed in circumstances similar to his. Avoid his sin—let that be a beacon to warn you—but imitate his virtues. Pray the Lord to make you a partaker of the fullest measure of the Grace which the Psalmist possessed, but never look at his life as you gaze at a statue—merely to admire it and to say how beautifully it is worked—but look at it as a boy should look at his copy, that he may imitate it. Look at it as the soldier looks at his leader, that he may march step by step as he sets him the example and, above all things, always keep your eyes on David’s Lord and Master, lest even David should be the means of misleading you! Let your admiration both of David and of the Lord Jesus Christ be practical—there is far too much of that kind of religion which consists in merely admiring other people, or in seeing what we, ourselves, ought to be, or in regretting that we are not what we should be—true godliness is manifested as we bring forth the fruit of the Spirit by being and doing that which we feel we ought to be and to do. To this end, gracious Spirit, be pleased to help us! Let us give to our text that sort of meditation which shall all the while be aiming at a practical result—and while we see how David fled to his God in the time of trial, let us each one, also, make this resolve, in the strength of the Holy Spirit—“I will do the same as David did. I will flee unto God to hide me.”

In our text we have David’s declaration to the Lord, “I flee unto You to hide me.” We also ought to do as David did, but no man will do this unless he has the five things of which I am about to speak.

I. And, first, no man will ever flee to God to hide him unless he has A SENSE OF DANGER.  
David was in danger from many cruel enemies and he fled to God to hide him from them. You and I may not be in any such danger as that, physically. We live in a country where, happily, we are protected from such a danger as that—at least, the most of us do—but there are other dangers to which we are exposed. David fled to God to hide him because he realized the danger in which he was placed and we shall only flee to the Lord to hide us when we realize our own personal peril.  
We are all well aware that many persons have perished because they have not realized their danger. You know how often this is the case. Men have gone, without any thought of peril, into places where there have been pestilential odors or the seeds of deadly diseases. If they had known what was there, they would not have gone in that direction, or they would have taken various precautions to guard themselves from infection. But, in ignorance of their peril, they have breathed the fatal air and have gone home to sicken and die. Many a gallant ship has struck upon a hidden reef, or upon a sandbank that was not marked on the chart. I have never heard of any vessel being wrecked through its officers keeping too good a look-out. Nor do we often read of ships being lost because the captain was too anxious to keep far away from the treacherous sands and the dangerous headlands. But we often hear of wrecks which have occurred through the captain’s ignorance of the danger to which his vessel was exposed. Every now and then we learn that some obstruction has been encountered upon the railway as the express train has came rushing along. If the driver had but known that the permanent way, as it is called, was out of order and that there would be a collision if he did not stop the train, he would have done all that he could to avoid such a calamity—but because he did not know that he and his passengers were in danger, he went on as though all had been well—and the most terrible consequences ensued.  
Many have perished—I am using the word, “perish,” in the ordinary sense—because they have not known that they were in danger. And we know (oh, that it were not so!) that concerning spiritual things, there are millions of our fellow countrymen who are in danger of the eternal wrath of God, yet they are not conscious that it is so. They know that they are living in sin and they have some dim perception that sin is an evil thing in God’s sight, yet they are not fully conscious of what sin is. Many of them do not know, in the full meaning of the word, that they are sinners. See how contented they are with their fancied righteousness, conceiving themselves to be in perfect safety—and all the while they are in the utmost peril! They eat and they drink. They are married and they are given in marriage as though such a state of things would last forever. Talk to them concerning the last dread conflagration which is to consume the world and they will laugh you to scorn, and cry, “Peace and safety,” even though sudden destruction is coming upon them! If we could once make men realize that they are in danger, there would be some hope that they would seek to escape from the peril that threatens them! But we cannot make them believe in its reality and certainty. They are unbelieving with regard to such disturbing news. If we cried aloud to them, “Peace, peace,” although we know there is no peace for them as long as they continue as they now are, they would probably believe us, for they lend their credulous ears to any superstition that seems to promise them a false peace. But if we try to warn them of their danger— danger of the most terrible kind—they will not, as a rule, be persuaded to listen to such unwelcome tidings—or if they do listen, they do not believe our message and they will not admit they are in danger.  
If any such persons are present with us here—and I fear that there are some—I mean those who have no sense of danger and yet have never trusted in Christ for salvation, let me remind you, dear Friends, that your sins must inevitably bring punishment upon you! There is a Judge of all the earth who must do right—and every transgression of His righteous Law must be followed by punishment, otherwise why should there be a Judge of the earth at all if He is indifferent to the iniquities of man? Let me also remind you that your sin is holding you in its power and though, at present, you may not indulge in the grosser forms of vice, you are in great danger of going much further into paths of sin than you like to think you will. You cannot stop in an evil course just when and where you please. You cannot say to sin, “Thus far shall you go and no further.” The beginnings of evil are like the letting out of water—and when the dyke is once broken and the pent-up flood is set free—it soon deluges the fields and, perhaps, sweeps away multitudes of men and their habitations as well. Oh, that men could but realize that while they are living in sin, they are always in danger of committing more sin, and yet more sin—going on from bad to worse and from worse to the very worst of all!

Many a young man would shudder with horror if he could foresee what he will yet become unless the Grace of God shall prevent it. You have often seen that familiar picture of the child and the kind of man that he will yet become—either drunken or sober. If that child should be told that, one day, he would be like that red-faced old drunkard, he would not believe that he could ever grow to be as bad as that! Neither will most young men who are now living in sin, believe that they can ever grow to be what they will be if they continue in their present course. Yet that is the danger to which they are continually exposed—the danger of sin always producing yet more sin—and, to my mind, it seems to be punishment of a most grievous kind even if there were no other, that sin should be allowed to breed within itself something yet more black and foul and filthy than it is itself! So foul that on the cancer of sin there comes yet another and another, more foul and loathsome, and yet another, and another, and another until the man who was possessed with one devil becomes possessed with seven devils even more wicked than the first one was! There is this real danger, this grievous danger, in the case of every unconverted man or woman upon the face of the earth! Therefore each one of them should cry unto the Lord, “I flee unto You to hide me.”  
No man ever flees to God for shelter until he realizes that he is in danger, yet all men, whether they are the children of God or the children of this world, are in danger of one kind or another. As for the men of this world—the children of disobedience—they are in danger of the punishment which is due on account of their present sin and that awful growth of sin of which I have been speaking. But are the children of God also in danger? Ask them and they will tell you that they are pilgrims to the Celestial City which they will, in due time, reach by God’s Grace. But they will also tell you that all along the road to Heaven, there are dangerous places where the traveler might fall to his very grievous hurt— for instance, the descent in the Valley of Humiliation, with Apollyon waiting there, determined to slay, or at least to wound the pilgrim! Or the Valley of the Shadow of Death, a little further on, with its miry bog and its hobgoblins and all manner of terrifying sights and sounds. And then the Enchanted Ground with its temptation to the pilgrim to sleep. And Vanity Fair, where there are all sorts of ill wares to allure and deceive the pilgrim. Dangers of every sort beset the followers of the Lamb—and they are only safe as they are Divinely protected. The moment you become a Christian, you are—  
*“Safe in the arms of Jesus,”*  
as far as your ultimate and final perseverance is concerned, but all the while you are on the road to Heaven you must wear the armor provided for the good soldiers of Jesus Christ, for you are always exposed to danger from the adversary’s arrows and sword. All the while that you are in the earthly pastures, you need the protection of the good Shepherd. Why? Because you are in danger from the roaring lion who goes about seeking whom he may destroy and unless the Great Shepherd’s rod and staff protect you, you will certainly be destroyed!  
Let me also remind you that some dangers are not readily perceived and those are generally the worst of all. We may be able to keep clear of “the arrow that flies by day,” but who can guard himself against “the pestilence that walks in darkness”? Possibly we do not fall into open sin, but the dry rot of gradual declension—the silent sliding away of the heart from Christ—who but God can guard us against that? Many a man is caught in the invisible nets of Satan and well-near destroyed even while he dreams that he is safely pursuing the path that leads to Heaven! Therefore do I sound the alarm and ring the bell again and again to remind you that we are all in danger, though some think they are not! Those who think they are not are the very persons who are in the greatest danger of all because they think they are not in peril. I wish I had the power to awaken all of you to a true sense of your danger with regard to spiritual things, for then you would, like David, flee to God to hide you. You never will do that until you realize the peril in which you are placed and recognize that as long as you are not abiding in Christ, you are in continual peril and that your only safety lies in fleeing to God to hide you, even as the Psalmist did long ago.  
II. The second great need of a man in order that he may flee to God to hide him is A SENSE OF WEAKNESS.  
A man who thinks that he can fight his own battles in his own strength will not flee to God to hide him. But we are, all of us, as weak as water if we are left to ourselves and we soon show that we are quite unable to cope with our spiritual foes. The unforgiven sinner proves how weak he is by yielding at once to the tempter. He has a traitor within his own heart who opens the gates to Satan and so he is easily overcome. The Believer, though he has within him the new life which hates sin, is as weak as other men if he is left without the Spirit of God for a single moment. There is enough of the fire of Hell in you, my Brother—you who are the most spiritual and most like Christ—to set all Hell aright again if the infernal fires were ever put out! You are inclined toward that which is good, but if the Grace of God ever left you, you would be quite as much inclined toward that which is evil! I will not quite say what Ralph Erskine said concerning himself—  
*“On good and evil equal bent  
And both a devil and saint”—*  
but I will say that if a saint could ever be left of God, he would soon become a devil. And he who was so eager after that which was good, would be just as eager after that which is evil. So again I say that we are, all of us, as weak as water if left to ourselves.  
But some people think that they are very strong. Hear how the boastful man says, “I can drink my glass of beer or wine, but I shall never become a drunkard. I can attend the theater and see what a low standard of morals prevails there, but I shall never fall into such an evil thing as fornication or adultery! I shall never became a blasphemer! I am not in the habit of even using coarse language and it is quite impossible that I should become profane.” He thinks, when he stakes his small sums of money, that he will never become a gambler. “No,” he says, “I am not such a fool as that.” Yet, often, when a man says that, you may write his true name in large capital letters—“A FOOL”—for there is no other fool who is so foolish as the one who thinks he is not such a fool as other men are!  
When Hazael was told by Elisha what he would afterwards do, he exclaimed, “Is your servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?” Ah, Brothers and Sisters, we are all sadly weak and those are the weakest of all who think themselves to be strong! Past failures ought to have taught us all how great is our weakness. I wonder if any of you ever tried to soar away into the clouds with the perfectionists who delight to go up in a balloon and seek to live far above all ordinary mortals? If so and if you are at all like me—and I expect your flesh and blood are very similar to mine—I imagine that you soon discovered your mistake. The very day that you thought your temper was perfect, you found that it was very imperfect! And at the very time that you intended to have no thought or care, and when you had made up your mind that you were not coming down again to the level of this poor groveling world, you found that you could not rise an inch above the ground and that you were, as far as spiritual things were concerned, just like a lump of lead! You were made to feel that the best of men are but men at the best and, in that way, your failure taught you how weak you are. Even if you are the best man or woman in the world, in yourself you are utter weakness—only Christ Himself can make anything of you! Saint as you are, you are still a sinner saved by Grace and you are only holy as you are made so by the blessed Spirit who sanctifies you! If you were left by Him for a single moment, your sinnership would come to the front all too prominently and your saintship would retire to the rear.  
Now, Brothers and Sisters, in our weakness lies our strength. The Apostle Paul says, “When I am weak, then am I strong.” And I wish it were possible for me to produce in all of you, whether you are sinners or saints, the sense of positive inability and utter weakness, for, until you feel that, you will never say to the Lord, “I flee unto You to hide me.” On the contrary, you will stand out boldly in the place of danger and you will even defy your foes to do their worst against you! You will venture into worldliness. You will go up to the very mouth of the furnace of sin. You will become more daring and more presumptuous and you will be less on your watchtower—you will keep on going further and further in the wrong way as long as you imaging that you are strong. But if the Lord will aim His arrows right at the very heart of your strength and lay all your fancied glory in the mire and make you to know that you are less than the least of all saints, then it will be better for you. But before you will reach this point, you will have to confess your own nothingness and

say— *“But, oh, for this no strength have I!  
My strength is at Your feet to lie.”*  
Then you will flee to the Lord to hide you, and then you will be hidden by  
Him in a safe place—but never till then.  
III. A third thing which we must all have before we are likely to use  
the language of the text with truth is A PRUDENT FORESIGHT—“I flee  
unto You to hide me.”  
The ungodly man and, in a measure, also the unwise Believer, will  
perceive the peril in which he is placed and yet hesitate, linger, delay,  
deliberate, procrastinate. This is great folly, yet it is just what thousands  
are doing. I feel sure that some of you who are here are not prepared to

live—much less are you prepared to die. I am glad to see you come to the  
House of God on a weeknight, for it looks as if you had some desire to  
find out the way of Everlasting Life. Yet how many there are among you  
who are living as if this life were all! You are quite unprepared for that  
great day to which you all know you are hastening and you do not like to  
even hear anything about death and the judgment to come because you  
are utterly unfit to face those stern realities. Are you always going to put  
off thoughts about these all-important matters and to go on living  
without the slightest preparation for eternity? You know that you are in  
danger and that you are too weak to face that danger all alone though  
you have not yet fully perceived how great your weakness is. Oh, that  
you would be wise enough to begin to look about you for a way of escape!  
When you are in this sense, wise, you will flee to God to hide you—but  
until you do get at least a little of this sacred prudence and some of the  
wisdom which the Holy Spirit teaches, you will delay, and delay, and  
delay, till, on some dread day, the long-gathering clouds will discharge  
the awful storm of Divine Judgment upon your devoted head! And then  
you will not be able to flee to Christ to hide you, for the harvest will be  
past and the summer will be ended—but you will be “not saved.” The Lord, by His Grace, has made Christian men and women more full of forethought than the ungodly are. And they have desired to escape from the wrath to come and they have done so. And let me tell you, Sinner, you who have not yet fled to Christ for salvation, that while it is a blessed thing to be delivered from the wrath to come, it is also a most delightful thing to be delivered from the fear of it even now! I do not think that I could live an hour without being in the bitterest agony if I had any sort of doubt about my safety in Christ Jesus, for I have a most vivid sense of my danger and my weakness apart from Him and these, like wings, bear me to the Rock of Ages where I can hide in absolute security. But I could never rest in peace if I thought that God was angry with me, or if I knew that if I were to drop down dead, my soul would be in Hell! How can any of you remain unconcerned in such a sad condition as that? Surely it must be because you do not realize what your true condition is!  
If I could lock some of you up in a room and make you think about your position with regard to God, you would be very uncomfortable. You would almost as soon go to prison as sit down to think about the needs of your immortal spirit. Yet it is wrong for a man to be afraid to look into the books in which he keeps his soul’s accounts! It is worse than foolish to be afraid to test the soundness of the foundation of the house in which he dwells! It is sheer madness to be afraid to look to the state of his soul to see whether it has the marks of death upon it or not! Do not any of you be so foolish, so insane! You insure your lives, you insure your houses, you put on warmer garments as winter approaches and if you have only some slight ailment, you run to a doctor! Have you no care about your immortal souls? Have you no anxiety concerning death and eternity? Or are you resolved to play the fool before high Heaven? I pray you, do not do it, but awake to something like prudence! And any one of you who does so will say to God, as David did, “I flee unto You to hide me.” You never will do this until you exercise such wise forethought as I urge upon you.  
IV. Now, fourthly, and briefly, before anyone of us will say to the Lord, “I flee unto You to hide me,” there must be A SOLID CONFIDENCE. What kind of confidence do I mean? A solid confidence that God can hide us. Did you notice the second hymn that we sang? It always seems to me that the writer had a wonderful conception of God in His awfulness  
and greatness to be feared and then he says—  
*“Yet I may love You, O my God!”*  
Think of the great God who made the Heavens and the earth, who is  
everywhere, filling all things and doing all things according to the good  
pleasure of His own will—and then say to yourself, “If I flee to Him—if He  
will permit me to flee to him to hide me—how safe I must be! It is He of  
whom I have been afraid, but if I can hide in Him, how secure I shall be!  
If I can find a shelter in Him, what a perfect shelter that must be!” When  
God lifts up His sword of Justice in His almighty hand to smite the  
sinner, if that sinner can lay hold upon His arm and cling firmly to it,  
how can God smite him? And He urges us to take hold of His strength! A heavy blow falls with the greatest force upon those who are some little distance away from the striker. When a man intends to strike a tremendous blow, if his adversary runs up close to him and clings to his arm, what can he do with him? And fleeing to God to hide us does, as it were, disarm God—therefore I urge you to flee to God in Christ that He may hide you from His Justice and He can rightly do this because Christ has borne for all Believers the punishment that was due to their sin and, therefore, the God of Justice can, Himself, smile when He sees a sinner hidden in the Christ who made a full and complete Atonement for his sin!  
Where can any of you flee from the Presence of God? If you ride upon the sunbeams, He will track you. If you plunge into the deeps of the sea, He will discover you. If you could climb up among the stars, He could pluck you from your hiding place, for He is everywhere. But if you flee to God in Christ to hide you, you must be safe forever! I have read an old story of a rebel who was hunted by a certain king, but who disguised himself and entered into the king’s tent and partook of his hospitality before anyone discovered that he was the very man whose life the king had been seeking. And the king nobly and generously refused to kill the foe who had fled for shelter to his own tent. O poor guilty Soul, this is the message of the Gospel—Flee to God to hide you from God! Turn to Him as the prodigal returned to his father to obtain forgiveness of the wrong which he had done to his father!  
And you Christian men and women, this is to be your constant joy, that you always can hide in God—that there is no trouble, difficulty, or danger from which God will not be a shelter to you, for, as He is a shelter from His own Justice, He must be a shelter from everyone else and everything else that would harm you! And you may always hide in God. You will never say to the Lord, “I flee unto You to hide me,” until you know that you may hide in Him. Yes, Beloved, you may flee to God to hide you, for God is never more truly God than when He receives poor souls that make Him to be their hiding place. It is said that on one occasion when certain wise men were sitting together in council, a poor bird, which was pursued by a hawk, flew into the bosom of one of the counselors and he—the only man in the whole company who would have done such a thing—plucked the trembling bird out of his bosom, wrung its neck and threw it away from him! Whereupon the other counselors all rose up and voted for his immediate expulsion from their assembly, for they all felt that any man who could do such a deed as that was unworthy to have a place in their ranks—and we may be quite sure that the ever-merciful Jehovah will never take a soul that has flown in His bosom for shelter and destroy it!  
You dread God, poor Soul, but you need never do so. If you are in Christ Jesus, God is so fully reconciled to you that when you are pursued by sin, or Satan, or trouble of any kind, the safest place for you to fly to is His bosom and there you are safe forever, for He will never cast you out! If you have this confidence in God, you will say to Him, as David did, “I flee unto You to hide me.”  
V. One thing more is needed and that is ACTIVITY OF FAITH. There are some of you who have heard what I have been saying about hiding in God. And as you go home you will say, “Yes, we know that we are in danger, we know that we are weak, we know that we need a secure hiding place and we know that God is willing to hide us.” Well, then, if you know that, will you not at once flee to Him to hide you? Beloved, you who have often fled to Him to hide you, will not you again flee to Him? Some of you may have a new form of trouble which has just come upon you and it is of such a kind that you do not like to tell anybody about it. I pray you, do not keep it to yourself for even another minute, but flee to God and tell Him all about it! I must confess my own folly in this respect, for I have been foolish enough, partly through weariness of body and brain, to nurse a trouble which I ought to have cast upon the Lord long ago. One does not mind nursing his own children who may grow up to be a comfort to him, but it is always a pity to nurse trouble, for that often means taking a serpent’s eggs and putting them into our bosom to hatch there into serpents that will sting us! This is a most foolish course of action—would it not be far wiser for us if as soon as any trouble comes upon us, to flee to the Lord to hide us from it? Let us be cowardly enough to run away from our trouble! No, it will not be cowardice, but true bravery to always run to God as soon as any trouble comes upon us, each one of us crying to Him with David, “I flee unto You to hide me.” Suppose that 20 troubles should come to us in a day and that we should flee to God 20 times with them? I think that we might almost pray to God to send 20 more troubles, so that we might flee to Him 40 times a day! Any reason for going to God must be a blessing to us, for going to God is going to bliss! So we may even turn our troubles into blessings by making them drive us to Him.  
I want to steer you, dear Friends, to the practical point of my subject. Have you been worrying yourself, since you have been here, about a trial that you expect to fall upon you towards the close of this year? You fear that Christmas is not likely to be “a merry Christmas” to you—there are many bills coming in and not much hope of the money with which to meet them. Well, then, flee to God with that trouble and whatever is burdening your heart or your mind, flee to God about it and leave it all in His hands—and go on your way rejoicing!

Last of all, is there not some poor sinner here who has never yet believed in Jesus Christ as his or her Savior? How happy I should be if even before you leave this place, you would flee to the Lord to hide you! You do not need even to go into the vestry to talk to the elders. You may do that, if you like, and they will be glad to see you—but your best plan is to tell the Lord, while you are sitting in that seat, that you are a sinner far off from Him and that you wish that He would save you. Ask Him, for Christ’s sake, to have mercy upon you. Trust His dear Son to save you. Tell Him that you do trust Him to save you and He will do it, for, according to your faith shall it be unto you. Flee to Him to hide you! There are His dear wounds and you are a poor feeble dove—and the cruel hawk is after you. You cannot fight with him for he would tear you in pieces—you can only escape from him by flying to the wounds of  
Jesus! Do so, then, for your pursuer cannot reach you there— *“Come, guilty souls, and flee away  
Like doves to Jesus’ wounds!  
This is the welcome Gospel-Day,  
Wherein free Grace abounds.”*  
God bless you all, for His dear Son’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 143.**

Psalm 143:1, 2. Hear my prayer, O LORD, give ear to my supplications: in Your faithfulness answer me, and in Your righteousness. And enter not into judgment with Your servant: for in Your sight shall no man living be justified. That is, of course, apart from the wondrous system of Justification by Faith in Jesus Christ whereby Believers are made the righteousness of God in Him! Apart from that righteousness, no man living can be justified in the sight of God.

3, 4. For the enemy has persecuted my soul, he has smitten my life down to the ground; he has made me to dwell in darkness as those that have been long dead. Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate. Are any of you passing through this trying experience? If so, does it not encourage you to find that somebody else has been this way before you? The road is very rough, but there is a man’s footprint there, the footprint of a man whom God greatly loved, even the man after God’s own heart! Ah, dear Friends, in those deep sorrows of yours, you are not alone—David has passed this way before you and, what is still better, David’s Lord has traversed this rough road! In all our afflictions He was afflicted. He was tempted in all points like as we are, so He can most perfectly sympathize with us in all the troubles through which we are called to pass.

5, 6. I remember the days of old; I meditate on all Your works; I muse on the work of Your hands. I stretch forth my hands unto You: my soul thirsts after You, as a thirsty land. Selah. One of the things which God’s people are in the habit of doing, when they are in deep trouble, is to look back upon their past experiences. You may have seen the bargemen on the canal push backwards that they may propel the barge forwards and, sometimes we who believe in Jesus Christ have to push backwards—to look back on our past experiences in order to derive fresh courage for the present hour of trial. So the Psalmist says, “I remember the days of old, I meditate on all Your works; I muse on the work of Your hands.” Yet in David’s day of distress, when he had meditated upon his experiences in the past, that did not satisfy him. He wanted his God, therefore he cried unto the Lord, “I stretch forth my hands unto You: my soul thirsts after You as a thirsty land.” When the fields have long been dry because there has been no rain, you see how the earth opens its mouth in great cracks as if it gaped for the rain it so sorely needs—and David’s soul seemed thus gaping with a strong desire after the living God—“My soul thirsts after You as a thirsty land.”

7, 8. Hear me speedily, O LORD; my spirit fails: hide not Your face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit. Cause me to hear Your loving-kindness in the morning, for in You do I trust: cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto You. This is a beautiful prayer which any of you might present to the Lord—“Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk.” You are perplexed as to what you ought to do. You wish to do that which is right, but you are not sure what is right. Yet God can cause you to know the way wherein you should walk—He leads the blind by a way that they know not and in paths which they have not seen. So breathe this prayer to Him in the hour of your perplexity—

*“Guide me, O You great Jehovah,  
Pilgrim through this barren land!  
I am weak, but You are mighty,  
Hold me with Your powerful hand!”*

Or say with David, “Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk, for I lift up my soul unto You.” He seems to say, “My soul is like a dead weight which cannot lift itself up; but in the strength which You do impart to me, I lift it up, I will not let it lie like a dead log before You—‘I lift up my soul unto You.’”

9, 10. Deliver me, O LORD, from my enemies: I flee unto You to hide me. Teach me to do Your will. This is another most blessed prayer—“Teach me to do Your will.” Most of us want to have our own will and to go our own way—but each one who is truly wise prays to the Lord, “Teach me to do Your will.”

10, 11. For You are my God; Your spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness. Quicken me, O LORD, for Your name’s sake: for Your righteousness’ sake bring my soul out of trouble. What earnest pleading is this and how powerful it is! Every word is so fitting that if I had time to explain it, you would note the force and appropriateness of every syllable that the Psalmist here uses.

12. And of Your mercy cut off my enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul: for I am Your servant.  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—57, 821, 195.  
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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 exorcising 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 is 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 call 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!

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #1796 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

CONCERNING SAINTS  
NO. 1796

**A SERMON PREACHED ON A THURSDAY EVENING IN THE SUMMER OF 1884,  
BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“All Your works shall praise You, O LORD; and Your saints shall bless You.” Psalm 145:10.**

Do not throw yourselves back in your seats and say, “This will be a sermon for saints and, therefore, we may be excused from listening to it.” Do you not see that the first clause gives you a fair word and a kindly hint? “All Your works shall praise You, O Jehovah.” Through this you may enter, as by an open door, for if you are

 not Jehovah’s saints, you are His works and are bound to praise His name! In these days of harvest and full summertime, every created thing appears to praise God by its very existence. Insect and fern, pebble and rippling brook, star and cloud, wind and dew—all reflect the wisdom and goodness of the Most High! Many a man’s works are no credit to him and, even in cases where men have worked well and produced much which is to their honor, yet certain of their works are not to their credit, but deserve to be plunged in darkness.

It is never so with a single work of the Eternal—all His works are perfect! He puts no bad work into them, He uses no base material, He never makes up with paint and varnish for grievous deficiencies. Set all His works in the sunlight—yes, put them all under the strongest magnifier— and they tell no tale against Him, but they all publish Him as the best of workers, the grandest of thinkers, the most complete of designers. You may range high Heaven, or descend into the depths of the sea, or dig into the darkest mines, but you will come upon nothing which can find fault with Him. You may break God’s works in pieces and examine them in minute detail. You may pass them through the fire again and again, but tested as they may be, they bear but one witness—

*“The hand that made us is Divine,”*  
and that Divine hand is excellent in knowledge and power.

All God’s works also praise Him by a sort of intent—they make praise His glory as of set purpose. We are speaking of the inanimate creation— we say inanimate—but in this matter they seem to be all alive to the glory of the Lord! The worlds that roll through space and the dust that dances in the sunshine; the fire bolt that levels the tower and the snow-flakes that dance in their wintry courts; the yeast of the foaming sea, the pollen of the ripening flower and the cleavage of the crystal—all vie with one another in proclaiming the greatness of the wisdom and the goodness of the Lord! Not only are the heavens proclaiming the Glory of God, and the firmament showing His handiwork, but the earth and the air, the sea and all deep places, the hillside and the cottage garden are all emulating each other in the blessed work of praising Jehovah!

How often at sunset has it seemed to us as if God held His court far away in the west, amid the bright and burning clouds and there the seraphs bowed as visibly as before the throne above! Looking across the sea, when the sun has just been rising in the morning, we have seen the gates of Heaven opened and the skirts of the Lord’s robes have been as visible to us as once they were to Moses! At hush of midnight, when ten thousand stars are adoring, earth’s stillness proves her to be a profound worshipper. There are a thousand times when Nature keeps her special Sabbaths and in God’s temple does everyone speak of His glory!

Awaken, then, my Friend! You are a creature, if not a new creature in Christ Jesus. Adore your Benefactor if you do not know your Savior! The known may be a step to the unknown. In joining God’s works in His praise, you may be led to join with Himself. You have never fully and properly attended to this first call—you cannot, therefore, complain if you find yourself too feeble for the second. Have you nothing for which to praise the Lord? Is not your body a specimen of His handiwork? Are not the organs of nutrition and the supplies which are given to them, proofs of His goodness? Your deliverance from fever and a hundred other deaths is something worthy of a song! All your domestic hopes, joys and desires, though they reach not to eternal things and are but draughts from the nether springs, yet they come from the same hand as the higher gifts! And they may lead you home, for the prodigal, who came back to his father, was sweetly tempted there by the remembrance of the bread in his father’s house, of which there was enough and to spare.

Yet I confess that there is, in the text, much that is special for a chosen people. It speaks to those who dwell within the inner circle, who, by position, character and privilege are elevated to the highest form of service. Praise is high as Heaven and lasting as eternity—and yet there is something that is better, for it is written—“Your saints shall bless You.” Everywhere throughout the Word of God you see a very clear and sharp distinction between those that fear God and those that fear Him not—between the two seeds, the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman— between those that are living in sin and those that have been delivered from it, and so are made saints unto God. There are two peoples and always will be while the present dispensation lasts.

And the difference between them is great and vital. For this reason it must be difficult, if not impossible, to compose forms of prayer which shall be suitable for two conditions of men so essentially opposite. There should be, in our public prayers, as there is in the Word of God, this distinction clearly made and manifested. There is a line which divides, today, between Israel and Egypt, even as there will be a line of fire, proceeding from the Judgment Seat, which will effectually and finally sever between the heirs of God and the heirs of wrath. At the very beginning we shall have to remind you that the text suggests this. We are all God’s works. “It is He that has made us, and not we, ourselves,” but we are not all “His people and the sheep of His pasture.”

We have not yet all been brought within the bonds of the Covenant. We have not yet all been saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation and, therefore, we are not all His saints! Divide yourselves by a Scriptural judgment. “Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith; prove your own selves.” Rest in no neutrality! Dream not of communion between Christ and Belial. “You cannot serve God and mammon.” You are either with God or against Him—and the sooner you know your true position, the better. I shall never preach to you as if you were all alike, for I know you are not. Some of you are in Christ and others of you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity. I shall not, tonight, forget that I have tares as well as wheat before me—and I shall try to make that distinction appear all through my sermon.

I shall want you carefully to notice three things. The first is, that God has a people whom He calls His saints—of these we read in the text. Secondly, these are placed in the first rank, for while it is said, “All Your works shall praise You, O Lord,” the saints occupy a special position and are spoken of by themselves. They are put before all others—“and Your saints shall bless You.” Thirdly, these people render a special homage. While they join in the praise which comes up from all God’s works, they stand in an inner circle and fulfill a peculiar ministry and, therefore, we read, “Your saints shall bless You.”

I. Come, then, to our work. May the Holy Spirit help us! First, GOD HAS A PEOPLE WHOM HE CALLS HIS SAINTS. Who are they? Are they all dead? It is supposed so, for the usage of the Popery around us is to call men saints who have been long in their graves, while living men are not regarded in that light. I notice, even among those who call themselves Protestants, a great many relics of the old harlot of the seven hills, and among the rest, this nonsense of dead saintship! Somebody wrote me the other day about his, “sainted mother.” What did he mean? Had the Pope canonized her? Or did she become a saint by dying? Does death, which came in through sin, bring sainthood with it?

Assuredly not! If men are not saints before death, they certainly cannot be made saints after death. Do the coffin and the grave bring you this canonization? Does corruption in the tomb create an odor of sanctity? I am sure that it is not so, for it is written, “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still. And he which is filthy, let him be filthy still. And he that is righteous, let him be righteous, still, and he that is holy, let him be holy still.” Where death leaves us, judgment will find us! You cannot make a sinner into a saint by killing him. He who does not live as a saint, here, will never live as a saint hereafter.

When the Apostle Paul wrote letters to the Churches, he called the members of them saints. They were living men and women of whom he thus spoke! They were ordinary men and women like ourselves; poor in rank, greatly deficient in education and often without house or home. In some respects, they were even inferior to ourselves, for their former conversation had been so exceedingly lax that they ignorantly tolerated sins which, in these days, would not be endured for a moment! I believe that the Church of God at this day, taken as a whole, is better than the Church at Corinth was. For instance, there is no Church that I know of, worthy to be called a Church of Christ, that would tolerate, in its membership, one who had been guilty of incest. We would be quite sure to deal with such an open and crying crime as that! We have many faults today and they had a great many faults, then, for the Apostle had to write to some Churches twice over to warn them of certain very apparent evils. And yet, for all that, there were saints in those Churches, and Paul was accustomed to address those who were joined together in any one place as those who were called to be saints.

Saints, then, are not people who are dead and buried and are stuck up in niches for us to admire. There are saints, no doubt, before the Throne of God and we, too, are saints here below if we are what we should be— and if we have received that Grace which brings with it deliverance from the reigning power of sin—and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the heart. These saints are to be met with in our own country. Many persons have a high esteem for ministers whom they have never seen, who labor in exceedingly remote districts. Of course these good men and their churches must be absolutely perfect—a race of saints! Distance lends enchantment to the view! For my part, I love to believe in the holiness of those who are round about me, in the sanctity of my fellow laborers and in the fervent devotion of those who hold up my hands, from day to day, in my work of faith and labor of love.

There are as many saints in England as there are in America. I am not inclined to look to the Plymouth Church, or the Romish Church, or the Greek Church, or any other Church, for my saints—I find them right here in the Tabernacle!—

*“There my best friends, my kindred dwell,*

*There God my Savior reigns.”*  
It is all very fine to believe in the saintship of the Brethren in the Sunderbunds, or in Cathay, wherever those regions may be, but it argues a great lack of faith in the power of the Holy Spirit if we do not believe in His sanctifying influence upon the fellowship at home! I look for my saints among the Christian men and women who are busy all around me in Sunday school teaching, street preaching and other soul-winning work! It is the pure in heart who see God and I believe it is the pure in heart who see the saints of God. If we were more saintly, ourselves, saints would not be half as scarce as they are!

What is it to be a saint? Some people do not want to know, for with them it is a term of contempt. They say, “Oh, he is one of your saints!” They lay the emphasis on the word, “saints,” as if it were something very disgraceful, or, at least, despicable and hypocritical! Whenever I have that said to me—and it has happened more than once—I take my hat off out of respect to the title. I had rather be a saint than a Knight of the Garter! Sometimes I have said, “I wish you could prove your words,” for surely nobody need be ashamed of being called a saint unless he is afraid that he cannot maintain the name. But if you really are saintly and men apply the title to you in scorn, wear it upon your sleeve as your honor and make no attempt, whatever, to conceal the soft impeachment! I suppose that nobody would, as a general thing, be ashamed to be called a peer of the realm—and, certainly, to be a saint is a far more honorable thing than to be a Duke! The peerage the Queen can give—but saintship only God, Himself, can give—and if you have that, you need never be ashamed of it!

I have sometimes heard of the “Latter Day Saints.” I do not know much about them, but I greatly prefer the, “Every Day Saints.” Those people who are saints anywhere and everywhere are truly saints! And he that is not a saint everywhere is not a saint anywhere, for this is a thing that cannot be put off and on like our Sunday dress! Holiness must be a part of ourselves—it must be our nature to be saintly. Who, then, are saints? Some will tell us that they are persons who are totally free from sin in thought, word and deed. But where will you find these marvelous beings? I have never met with such! I have seen a few hare-brained enthusiasts who said that they were perfect, but you had only to watch them for a single day to discover their defects. A man absolutely free from all tendency to sin I have never seen on earth, nor have you—I thought we were all sinners and I have not altered the opinion.

I would not think he was much of a saint who did not confess that he was still somewhat of a sinner. I would be afraid that he did not know himself and that his standard of saintship was not as high as it ought to be. When a man is so good that he cannot be better, I perceive that, in some respects, he is so bad that he could hardly be worse! For instance, in the matter of pride, he has gone some few degrees beyond Lucifer, himself. When a soul is thoroughly saturated with the belief that it can be no better, it will be no better. That holy restlessness which makes a man lament his imperfections and pine after something more Christ-like, is part of the force by which we move upward towards higher degrees of spirituality and Grace. Self-satisfaction is the death of progress and, at the same time, the discovery of falsehood. The very power to become sanctified has departed from the man who boasts that he is so!

A certain great painter had been accustomed to perform great feats with his brush, but one day, having finished a picture, he laid down his palette and said to his wife, “My power to paint is gone!” “Oh,” she asked, “how is that?” “Well,” he answered, “up to this day I have always been dissatisfied with my productions, but this last picture I have painted, perfectly satisfies me and, therefore, I am certain that I shall never be able to paint anything worth looking at again.” As long as a man is dissatisfied with himself, he will be capable of great things. But when he feels that he has attained and is perfectly satisfied—depend upon it—nothing will come of him during the rest of his life. He has lost the very faculty of progress!

Oh, Brothers and Sisters, if we know ourselves and our God, every idea of our being absolutely perfect will make us sick to the death! We know we are nothing of the sort! Still, we also know that sin does not have dominion over us and that we are holiness unto the Lord—and in this we do and will rejoice and bless the Lord our God. Taking all that into consideration, we again ask the question, who are saints?

Saints, in the first place, are those whom God has set apart for Himself. He chose them to be His own portion from before the foundations of the world. He gave them, as men whom He had set apart for Himself, into the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are the people whom Christ speaks of when He mentions, “those whom You have given Me.” These are the saints. These, Christ has effectually and specially redeemed from among men, according to that text, “These were redeemed from among men.” And again, “Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it.” Whatever the general aspect of redemption—and it has a general one, wide as the race of men—yet it has also a special aspect towards those chosen ones whom God has taken to be His own from among all the inhabitants of the earth. These people, being thus God’s own, by His electing love, are, in due time, called effectually by His Grace.

“Come out from among them and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.” Having been redeemed by blood, they are, in due time, redeemed by power. The power of the Holy Spirit brings them out of Egypt’s bondage into the glorious liberty of God’s dear Son. From that day, these people become manifestly saints, a people that live in God, with God, for God, to God, by God—a people that do not belong to the rest of the world! “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.” “The people shall dwell alone and shall not be reckoned among the nations.” They are a singular people, “a peculiar people.” I have heard it objected, sometimes, “If I were religious, I should be so peculiar.” Of course you would! Scripture says that you would be. “Oh, but I should be one by myself!” Of course you would! “Know that the Lord has set apart him that is godly for Himself.” These are the saints, then—a people dedicated unto God through His own rich Grace, to live for Him—for them to live is Christ! “For you are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God.”

But who are the saints, again? How shall we know them? Well, they are known, next, by their holy life. They are not only dedicated to God, but they are made meet for God’s use by the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. Forget not all I have said about our imperfections, but, for all that, God’s people are a holy people! “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.” A man is described in Scripture, not by his infirmities, but by the general run and current of his life. We say of a river, that it runs to the south, although there may be eddies along the banks which run in an opposite direction to the main stream. Still, these are an inconsiderable matter. The main stream of the Thames is running constantly towards the sea and we speak not amiss or untruthfully when we say that it is so. And the main stream and set of the current of the life of a child of God runs towards that which is right, true and holy—both towards God and towards man.

If it is not so with you, dear Friend, I make very short work of it—you do not know the Lord! You have need to be born again and to be delivered from the power of sin. “His servants you are to whom you obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness.” Depend upon it, that which governs you is your king—and if evil governs you, then you belong to the Evil One! But where there is Grace in the heart, Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life. “Holiness is imputed,” says one. I say it cannot be imputed! The righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, but holiness is quite another term and you never find in the Word of God mention made of an imputation of holiness! That cannot be.

David says, “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? Or who shall stand in His holy place? He that has clean hands and a pure heart; who has not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.” These are actual qualities, not imputations. God’s saints are not drunks. God’s saints are not liars. God’s saints are not dishonest. God’s saints are not ungenerous and unloving. God’s saints are not a people that take delight in iniquity and follow after the wages of evil, like Balaam of old. God’s people are a people that follow after holiness and will never be satisfied till sin is exterminated from their hearts—root and branch! In fact, they will never get to Heaven till they get that holiness—and when they get it—they will be in Heaven, for they will awake in the likeness of their Lord! These, then, are the distinguishing marks of the saints of God. “Where shall we find these saints?” asks one. Slander says, “Nowhere,” but truthfulness affirms that there are many of them to be found. They are the ornaments of our households, the pillars of our churches, the delights of our communion and the glory of Christ. Oh, that we might be numbered among them!

Now I want to call your mind back to where we started. Our text speaks of saints, but they are said to be

 God’s saints. “All Your works shall praise You, O Lord; and Your saints shall bless You.” The devil has his saints and Rome has her saints, and self-righteousness has its saints and ceremonialism has its saints—but these are not God’s saints. God has His own saints and they belong to Him. They are peculiarly and especially His. They are as the signet upon His finger. Their names are engraved upon the palms of His hands. You remember how the Good Shepherd speaks of those who believe on Him—“My sheep”— notice that word “MY”—hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.” They are so completely His that they shall be His forever and ever—and they can NEVER be taken away from Him!

II. Well, now, secondly, I want you to notice that THESE ARE PLACED IN THE FIRST RANK. And the reason is of God’s Grace and mercy because He has done the most for them. “All Your works shall praise You, O Lord,” and “Your saints shall bless You,” because they are, in a very peculiar and remarkable manner, God’s works! God has created all things, but He has twice created His saints. He brought the world out of chaos, but He brought His people out of the land of darkness and of the shadow of death, from under the power and domination of every evil thing—yes, even from death and Hell, itself! For them He worked a creation and a resurrection! You that are His people have been made new creatures in Christ Jesus. Of you He says, “Behold, I make all things new.” You are, “begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

The new creation of saints infinitely surpasses the creation of the world. Saints are even placed higher than the angels who are around the Throne of God, “for unto which of the angels said He at any time, You are My son?” But He has said that unto you, so that in the scheme of creation, you rank above all once-created beings, for you are the twice-born, the twice-made. As in the king’s army of old there was a bodyguard that always stood around the king, whom they called the immortals, so in God’s great host there is a bodyguard—His holy ones, His saints, the twice-born, the immortals, of whom Christ says, “Because I live, you shall live also.”

But, again, God’s works of Grace are not only created by His own power, but they stand in great favor, in a covenant relation with Himself. Behold, He has made the covenant of day and night which shall not be broken. And He has made the covenant with the earth that He will no more destroy it with a flood. And He has covenanted that while the earth endures, seed time and harvest, and summer and winter shall not cease. After the same fashion has He made a covenant with His own redeemed that He will not be angry with them, nor rebuke them, world without end! The rainbow in the clouds is the token of the covenant of preservation which He made with all His works—but when you come to the spiritual covenant, that Everlasting Covenant is made of God, in Christ Jesus, with His chosen—and with them only! None but His own believing people can be said to be partakers in the Covenant of Grace, ordered in all things and sure—for the Man, Christ Jesus, was the Representative of those who are His own body, His own brethren, of whom He says, “I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which You have given Me.”

The second Adam is the Head of the new race which is born under the New Covenant, not according to the works of the Law, but according to the promise of the Grace of God. Isaac, the happy child of Sarah, the free woman, born according to the promise, lives at home with his father and is heir with his father forever. But Ishmael, the son of the bondwoman, born according to the strength of nature, is banished and cast off, as it is written, “Cast off this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with My son, even with Isaac.” Oh, rejoice, you people of God, that if there is a covenant with God’s ordinary works, there is a higher, better, deeper and more spiritual covenant made with you!

Further than this, God’s most tender consideration is given to His saints. He cares for all the works of His hands. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without being noticed by our Father. God cares for every fish of the sea—and even such fish as never see the light, but dwell in black pools in the monster caverns of the earth—are not forgotten of Him. But as for His children, what care He gives them! No farmer has as much care for his barn-door chickens as he has for his own little chicks indoors. The Lord cares for all those countless multitudes that wait upon Him, but there is the tenderer care of the Father for all those who are allied to Him by nature and are heirs with Him by Grace. Remember that text, “Like as a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear Him.” There is a special fatherly consideration and pity that the Lord has for all His children!

Let us look back and think how God has loved us long before we thought of Him and how He has thought of us when we have forgotten Him. One said to me, the other day, “What will become of Gordon?” I answered, “He is safe enough, I believe, for he has given himself into the hands of God, and He will take care of him.” To this the questioner replied, somewhat flippantly, “It may be so but, you see, he is so dashing that he gives God a great deal to think of and to do.” I did not like the expression, but still, it is exceedingly applicable to many of us, for the office of “Preserver of Men” is no flippant title in the case of the Most High. Even a quiet life at home is crowded with the most spiritual, minute and tender thoughts of God. The Lord’s guardian care extends to everything and to every particle of everything, so that nothing in the whole of life is left to chance, or regarded as a trifle!

And how sweetly the Lord cares for us! He does all so quietly, calmly, perfectly. Martha, you see, cannot go about her little room without making a fuss and complaining of Mary. But the great Father goes about His great house and takes care of all His children and never makes a complaint about the greatness of their needs, or the urgency of their necessities, or the repetition of their faults! He “gives liberally and upbraids not.” You who are God’s saints are first in the Almighty’s care. “I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinks upon me,” says David. It is worthwhile to be poor and needy, if for that reason we have more of the thought of God set upon us! See what a special position you occupy, oh, you sanctified ones—not only in creation and in the Covenant—but in the tender care of God!

And what a position you have as to God’s visits! “You visit the earth and water it: You greatly enrich it with the river of God, which is full of water.” But the visits of God to creation—what are they compared with His visits to us, His own redeemed? When He came to Bethlehem, He did so visit us that He took our nature and became bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh! And He still wears that nature. God is still Incarnate—

*“He is at the Father’s side*

*The Man of Love, the Crucified.”*  
To none of His other creatures has He paid such a visit as that! Even now, today, you who are humble and contrite are nearer to God than kings and princes. God, in His visitations of men, astounds us. “What is man, that You are mindful of him? Or the son of man, that You visit him?” Yet He will come to your cottage, come to your chamber, come to your sick bed. “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My Word.” “You have granted me life and favor, and Your visitation has preserved my spirit.” You see, the saints have the first seats, all along, and they hold them to the end of the chapter—for they shall be crowned with glory and honor.

God crowns the year with His goodness. The time is coming when the Lord will cover the earth with the wheat sheaf and with the barley crown— and these shall be followed by the ruddy fruits of the orchard. God shall make glad the heart of man with the varied gifts of His bounty! The earth has its coronation, but what is the coronation of the saints? “You shall come to your grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn comes in in his season.” Or, if it is not so with you, you shall behold your Lord coming here to receive you, for He has said it, “I will come again and receive you unto Myself.”

There is a glory yet to come to the whole of creation, for its groans and travail will lead up to its new birth. What a zodiac of glory will flame from the new heavens above the new earth at the latter day! But what of that? The greatest glory is for us to be fashioned, as we soon shall be, in the image of the Son of God—and then to dwell at His right hand forever! Between God and man there seems to be an infinite distance, yet when you see the God-Man, Christ Jesus, you perceive that God has made His creature, man, near of kin unto Himself! God has taken man into the nearest possible degree of affinity to Himself and has illustrated this by varied degrees of relationship. He has made us to be His sons and daughters and, as a corporate body, He has made us to be the spouse, the bride, the Lamb’s wife. The Lord Jesus is not ashamed to call us brethren! Thus are we child, spouse, brother, sister!

The nearness of our kin to Deity ought to overwhelm us with humble gratitude and intense delight. God has done infinitely more for us than for all His creatures besides. Rise as you may in creatureship, even till you reach the cherubim and the seraphim—even above these stands the Son of God—the Son of Man—and we are one with Him! Oh, the exceeding riches of the Grace and the Glory of God in His saints!

III. So I finish by noticing, dear Friends, that as God has a people called saints, and as He has put them in the front rank, THEY RENDER A SPECIAL HOMAGE to Him. This homage is true praise and yet it has a certain difference of principle in it, so that it is instructive to say, “All Your works shall

 praise You, O Lord,” but, “Your saints shall bless You.”

Praise is a very proper thing to render to God and, in common with all His works, we do render it. But praise has not in it those elements of warmth which belong to blessing God. For instance, you can praise a man and yet have no kind of regard for him. I suppose that when Wellington defeated the French at Waterloo, there could hardly be found in all the ranks of Napoleon’s army men who did not praise Wellington. They said, “He must, indeed, be a marvelous warrior to have annihilated such an army as ours.” They could not help praising him, but they could have no love for him and would, no doubt, have been heartily glad if he had never existed! In the same way, you probably know men towards whom you personally have no warm feelings and yet, when you see their works, you are bound to praise them.

A man is an eminent painter and you exclaim, “His pencil is instinct with life.” Still, the man is no friend of yours—you pronounce no blessings on his name. It may be that your feeling towards him is that of deep regret that such abilities should be united with so evil a character. A certain person is exceedingly skillful in his profession, but he treats you unjustly and, therefore, though you often praise him for his extraordinary performances, you cannot bless him, for you have no cause to do so. I am afraid that there might be such a feeling as that of admiration of God for His great skill, His wonderful power, His extraordinary justness—and yet no warmth of love in the heart towards Him. Cold-blooded philosophers have written of God as if He were some far-off abstraction—and they have allowed words to fall from their pens, like masses of ice which, when we have dissolved them, have been fragrant with reverence. Such men stand like the Israelites, outside the bounds, and gaze at the fire and smoke of Sinai, awe-struck and trembling.

As for us, it is our delight to come up unto God, even within the thick darkness, and to commune with Him as a man communes with his friend! Others may praise God, but it is ours, with our whole hearts, to bless His name! “Bless the Lord, O my Soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name!” Praise is a form of worship in which we cannot attain to communion with God of the highest order—for that we must ascend another step and learn to bless Him! I never read that God praises men. It may be true that in some sense He does so when He says, “Well done, good and faithful servant!” But I do not find the expression used in Scripture. God blesses men. Everybody knows that and, therefore, when we bless God, we enter upon a singularly happy fellowship with Him. He blesses us and we bless Him—and herein is communion! I grant you that between the two blessings there is a very great disproportion, but it is the same word, with much of the same meaning.

Again, God’s works all praise Him. The lily lifts itself upon its slender stem and displays its golden petals and its glittering ivory leaves—by its very existence it praises God! Yonder deep and booming sea rolls up in storm and tempest, sweeping everything before it—and every dash of its waves praises God! The birds in the morning and some of them all through the night, can never cease from praising—uniting with the ten thousand other voices which make ceaseless concert before the Throne of God! But observe, neither the flower, nor the sea, nor the bird praises with intent to praise. To them it is no exercise of intellect, for they do not know God and cannot understand His worthiness. Nor do they even know that they are praising Him! They exhibit His skill, His goodness and so forth—and in so doing they do much—but we must learn to do more. When you and I praise God, there is the element of will, of intelligence, of desire, of intent. And in the saints of God, there is another element— namely, that of love to Him, of reverent gratitude towards Him—and this turns the praise into blessing!

Oh, do you not feel, sometimes, as you behold the Glory of God, “Let His name be praised forever and ever”? When you stand at the foot of Calvary, you are not only astonished at the glorious love of God in Christ Jesus, but you are melted down and every beat of your heart is to the tune, “Blessed be His name!” Your soul goes out towards Jesus. It is not merely the sense of what He is, but the sense of what He is to you. “He loved me and gave Himself for me.” There is a consequent love and gratitude to Him who gave these benefits, and then there is a desire that you could do something by way of expressing your deep gratitude to Him. You have almost wished that Christ were at your door, hungry, so that you might feed Him. You cannot do it literally, but He tells you that you can do it in the person of His poor saints. You have thought, “Oh, that He were at my door on some cold night, when the snow was drifting, that I might open unto Him and give Him the best place at my table and my choicest bed! What a host I would be if He would but be my Guest!” Now that is blessing Him— an active benevolence towards Him. It is not merely praising Him, but it is feeling a good-will, a practical desire. If it were possible for you to bestow some good thing on Him, you would rejoice to bestow it. If you could do anything to make Him more happy than He is, if that were possible, you wish to do it!

It is the end and design of our actions which Christ looks at. It is not merely the hymn we sing, nor the alms we give, nor the service that we render—though all that is part of it—but the innermost soul of blessing God is loving Him! It is the love that bows over His feet and wets and waters and washes them with tears—that unbinds one’s locks to wipe those feet—that finds the precious alabaster box to break and pours the contents upon Him! It is that love that is not satisfied unless it can do something to show its love—this is blessing Him! Such love thinks nothing of what it does. All its thought is of Him and how it will please Him. Oh, for a crown to put upon His head! Oh, for a song to sing at His feet! Oh, for a perfect heart, that I might reserve it for Him, alone! Oh, that I had a soul as wide as Heaven, that I might entertain my Lord and Him, only!

No, even that were not large enough! Oh, that I could turn space into a great mouth with which to speak His praise and make all eternity the song and infinity the music! We cannot reach half way to our desire and so we have to wind up by saying, “Bless the Lord, O my Soul.” Go in, dear Hearts, and sit like David before the Lord, and cry, “Why all for me?” Then go out and talk about Him to your friends—and say great things and choice things concerning Him! Make Him a glorious God in their ears! Tell them there never was such a Friend, or Helper, or Savior, or Father, or Brother, or Husband as your God has been to you! Make them hear it— that you are the happiest of men because you have found the blessed God! Make all to know it—that you are the most content of men because you have chosen the good part, by His Grace, which is to sit at the feet of Jesus!

Bless Him in secret and then bless Him with the few that are your daily companions. And if God has given you the tongue of eloquence, bless His name before the crowds and never be ashamed! Tell them that there is no life like life for God; there is no joy like joy in Christ; no riches like the riches of God’s Grace; no Heaven like the Heaven of dwelling forever with Him! Oh, speak well of Him, and when you have spoken your best of Him, then wish to begin again and speak better! And when you have reached that, and said your best things, then say, “These are nothing compared with what He deserves. I will try again and yet rise beyond the loftiest conceptions of the present!”

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 145.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—145, 135, 221.  
Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #2695 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

CHRISTIAN CONVERSATION  
NO. 2695

A SERMON  
INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, OCTOBER 7, 1900.

**DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK, ON A LORD’S-DAY EVENING IN THE AUTUMN OF 1858.

**“They shall speak of the Glory of Your Kingdom, and talk of Your power.” Psalm 145:11.**

YOU have only to look at the preceding verse and you will discover, in a single moment, who are the people here spoken of who shall speak of the Glory of God’s Kingdom and talk of His power. They are the saints— “All Your works shall praise You, O Lord; and Your saints shall bless You. They shall speak of the Glory of Your Kingdom, and talk of Your power.” A saint will often be discovered by his conversation. He is a saint long before he knows it. He is a saint as being set apart unto salvation by God the Father in the Covenant decree of Election from all eternity. And he is a saint as being sanctified in Christ Jesus and called. But he is more especially a saint as being sanctified by the quickening influence of the Holy Spirit which renders him truly sanctified by making him holy and bringing him into conformity with the image of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Yet it is not at all times easy to discern a saint except by Scriptural marks and evidences. There is nothing particular about the countenance or dress of a saint to distinguish him from his fellows. The saints have faces like other men—sometimes they are sadly marred and furrowed by cares and troubles which worldlings do not know. They wear the same kind of garments as other men wear. They may be rich or they may be poor, but, still, there are some marks whereby we can discern them, and one of the special ways of discovering a saint is by his conversation. As I often tell you, you may know the quality of the water in a well by that which is brought up in the bucket—so may we tell a Christian by his conversation.

It is, however, much to be regretted that true children of the Lord often talk too little of Him. What is the conversation of half the professors of the present day? Honesty compels us to say that in many cases it is a mass of froth and falsehood and, in many more cases, it is altogether objectionable. If it is not light and frivolous, it is utterly apart from the Gospel and does not minister Grace unto the hearers. I consider that one of the great lacks of the Church, nowadays, is not so much Christian preaching as Christian

 talking—not so much Christian prayer in the Prayer Meeting, as Christian conversation in the parlor. How little do we hear concerning Christ! You might go in and out of the houses of half the professors of religion and you would never hear of their Master at all. You might talk with them from the first of January to the last of December and if they happened to mention their Master’s name, it would be, perhaps, merely as a compliment to Him, or possibly by accident. Beloved, such things ought not to be! You and I, I am sure, are guilty in this matter—we all have need to reproach ourselves that we do not sufficiently remember the words of Malachi, “Then they that feared the Lord spoke often, one to another, and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name.”

Possibly some will ask, “Well, Sir, how can we talk about religion? Upon what topic shall we converse? How are we to introduce it? It would not be polite, for instance, in the company with which we associate, to begin to say anything about the Doctrines of Grace, or about religious matters at all.” Then, Beloved, do not be polite! That is all I have to say in reply to such a remark as that. If it would be accounted contrary to etiquette to begin talking of the Savior, cast etiquette to the winds and speak about Christ somehow or other. The Christian is the aristocrat of the world. It is his place to make rules for society to obey—not to stoop down and conform to the regulations of society when they are contrary to the commands of his Master! Christ is the great Maker of laws, the King of kings and Lord of lords—and He makes His people also to be kings! Kings make rules for ordinary men to obey, so must Christians do. They are not to submit to others—they must make others, by the worth of their principles and the dignity of their character, submit to them! It is speaking too lightly of a Christian’s dignity when we say that he dare not do the right because it would not be fashionable! We care nothing for that, for “the fashion of this world passes away,” “but he that does the will of God abides forever.”

Another says, “What could I speak of? There are so few topics that would be suitable. I must not speak upon doctrinal subjects, for it would offend one of the party. They might hold different views. One might be a Wesleyan, one might be a Baptist, one might be an Independent, one a Calvinist, one an Arminian—how could I talk so as to please all? If I spoke of Election, most of them would attack me at once! If I began to speak of Redemption, we would soon differ on that subject, and I would not like to engender controversy.” Beloved, engender controversy rather than have wrong conversation! Better dispute over the Truth of God than agree about lies! Better, I say, is it to dispute concerning good doctrine! Far more profitable is it to talk of the Word of God, even in a controversial manner, than to turn utterly away from it and neglect it.

But, let me tell you, there is one point on which all Christians agree and that is concerning the Person, the work, and the blessed offices of our Savior. Go where you will, professors, if they are genuine Christians, will always agree with you if you begin to talk about your Savior—so you need not be afraid that you will provoke controversy! But supposing the mention of your Savior’s name does provoke dispute, then let it be provoked! And if your Master’s Truth offends the gentlemen to whom you speak of it, let them be offended! His name we must confess! Of His Glory we will continually talk, for it is written in our text, “They shall speak of the Glory of Your Kingdom, and talk of Your power.”

Now, then, first, here is a subject for conversation— “They shall speak of the Glory of Your Kingdom, and talk of Your power.” Secondly, we will try to find out some causes why Christians must speak concerning this blessed subject. And then, thirdly, I will very briefly refer to the effect of our talking more of Christ’s Kingdom and power.

I. First, here is A SUBJECT FOR CONVERSATION. “They shall speak of the Glory of Your Kingdom, and talk of Your power.” Here are two subjects, for God, when He puts Grace into the heart, does not lack a subject upon which we shall converse!

First, we are to converse concerning the Glory of Christ’s Kingdom. The Glory of Christ’s Kingdom should always be a subject of discourse to a Christian. He should always be speaking, not merely of Christ’s priesthood or His prophesying, but also of His Kingdom which has lasted from all eternity—and especially of that glorious Kingdom of Grace in which we now live, and of that brighter kingdom of millennial Glory which soon shall come upon this world to conquer all other kingdoms and break them in pieces.

The Psalmist furnishes us with some divisions of this subject, all of which illustrate the Glory of Christ’s Kingdom. In the 12th verse he says, “To make known to the sons of men His mighty acts.” The glory of a kingdom depends very much on the achievements of that kingdom so, in speaking of the Glory of Christ’s Kingdom, we are to make known His mighty acts. We think that the glory of Old England—at least, our historians would say so—rests upon the great battles she has fought and the victories she has won. We turn over the records of the past and we see her, in one place, vanquishing thousands of Frenchmen at Agincourt. At another period we see the fleets of the Spanish Armada scattered by the breath of God. We turn to different battles and we trace victory after victory, dotted along the page of history, and we say that this is the glory of our kingdom.

Now, Christian, when you speak of the Glory of your Master’s Kingdom, you must tell something of His great victories—how He routed Pharaoh, cut the Egyptian Rahab and wounded the dragon of the Nile. How He slew all the firstborn in one night. How, at His command, the Red Sea was divided. How the children of Israel crossed over in safety and the army of Egypt was drowned in the flood. Talk also of how God overcame Amalek and smote Moab. How He utterly cut off those nations that warred against Israel and caused them to pass away forever. Tell how Babylon and Nineveh were made to rue the day when God smote them with His iron hand. Tell to the world how God has crushed great nations and overcome proud monarchs. How Sennacherib’s hosts were left dead within their camp and how those that have risen up in rebellion against God have found His arm too mighty for their strength and prowess. Tell of the terrible acts of our Savior’s Kingdom! Record His victories in this world. But don’t stop there! Tell how our Savior routed the devil in the wilderness when he came to tempt Him. Tell how He—

*“All His foes to ruin hurled,  
Sin, Satan, earth, death, Hell, the world.”*

Tell how He has bruised the head of Satan. Tell how death has lost his prey. Tell how Hell’s deepest dungeons have been visited and the power of the Prince of Darkness utterly cut off. Tell how antichrist himself shall sink like a millstone in the flood. Tell how false systems of superstition shall flee away like birds of night when the sun rises too brightly for their dim sight to bear. Tell all this, tell it in Askelon and in Gath! Tell it the wide world over that the Lord of Hosts is the God of battles! He is the conqueror of men and of devils. He is Master in His own dominions. Tell the Glory of His Kingdom and rehearse “His mighty acts.” Christian, exhaust that theme if you can!

Then, in speaking of the Glory of Christ’s Kingdom, the next thing we talk of is its glorious majesty. The Psalmist further says, in the 12th verse that the saints shall not only “make known God’s mighty acts, but also the glorious majesty of His Kingdom.” Part of the glory of England consists not in her achievements, but in the state and majesty which surround her. In ancient times, especially, monarchs were noted for the great pomp with which they were surrounded. Thousands of houses would be razed to the ground to find a site for one dwelling for a king. His palace must be gorgeous with riches. Its halls must be paved with marble and its walls set with jewels. Fountains must sparkle. There must be feather beds of the riches down from sea ducks on which monarchs may recline. Music such as other ears do not hear. Wines from the uttermost regions of the earth and all manner of delights are reserved for kings! Precious stones and gems adorn their crowns and everything that is rich and rare must be brought to deck the monarch and increase the majesty of his kingdom.

Well, Christian, when speaking of Christ’s Kingdom, you are to talk of its majesty. Tell of your Savior’s glorious majesty. Speak of the many crowns that He wears upon His head. Tell of the crown of Grace which He wears continually. Tell of the crown of victory which perpetually proclaims the triumphs He has won over the foe. Tell of the crown of love wherewith His Father crowned Him in the day of His espousals to His Church—the crown which He has won by ten thousand hearts which He has broken and untold myriads of spirits which He has bound up. Tell to all mankind that the Glory of your Savior’s majesty far exceeds the glories of the ancient kings of Assyria and India. Tell that, before His Throne above, there stand, in glorious state, not princes, but angels! Not servants in gorgeous liveries, but cherubs, with wings of fire, waiting to obey His mighty behests! Tell that His palace is floored with gold and that He has no need of lamps, or even of the sun to enlighten it, for He Himself is the light thereof! Tell the whole world what is the glorious majesty of His Kingdom!

But once more, Christians, in speaking of the Glory of Christ’s Kingdom, you must talk of its duration, for much of the honor of the kingdom depends upon the time it has lasted. In verse 13 the Psalmist says, “Your Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, and Your dominion endures throughout all generations.” If one should say to you, concerning an earthly monarch, “Our king sits upon a throne which his ancestors have occupied for many generations,” tell him that a thousand years are to your King but as one day! If another tells you that his king has crowns which were worn by kings a thousand years ago, smile in his face and tell him that a thousand years are as nothing in Christ’s sight. When they speak of the antiquity of churches, tell them that you belong to a very ancient Church. If they talk to you of the venerable character of the religion which they profess, tell them that you believe in a very venerable religion, for yours is a religion which was from everlasting. Christ’s Kingdom was set up long before this world was brought forth—when as yet neither sun, nor moon, nor stars had been created—Christ’s Kingdom was firmly established! I wish Christians would more often talk about the Glory of their Master’s Kingdom with regard to the time it has lasted. If you would begin to talk of the past history of Gods Church, you would never have to exclaim, “I have said all that can be said about it, and I have nothing more to say.” You would need

 eternity to keep on going back, back, back, until you came to God alone! And then you might say—

*“In His mighty breast I see,  
Eternal thoughts of love to me.”*

Then you may speak concerning the future duration of your Master’s Kingdom. I suppose if you were to talk much about the Second Coming of Christ, you would be laughed at. You would be thought diseased in your brain, for nowadays there are so few who receive that great Truth of God, that if we speak of it with much enthusiasm, people turn away, and say, “Ah, we do not know much about that subject, but Mr. So-and-So has turned his brain through thinking so much about it.” Men are, therefore, half-afraid to speak of such a subject, but, Beloved, we are not afraid to talk of it, for Christ’s Kingdom is an everlasting Kingdom, and we may talk of the Glory of the future as well as of the past! Some say that Christ’s Church is in danger. There are many churches that are in danger—and the sooner they tumble down, the better! But the Church of Christ has a future that shall never end. It has a future that shall never become dim. It has a future which shall eternally progress in Glory. Her Glory now is the glory of the morning twilight—it soon shall be the glory of the blazing noon. Her riches now are but the riches of the newlyopened mine—soon she shall have riches much more abundant and far more valuable than any she has at present. She is now young, but, byand-by, she will come, not to her dotage, but to her maturity. She is like a fruit that is ripening, a star that is rising, a sun that is shining more and more unto the perfect day—and soon she will blaze forth in all her Glory, “fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners.” O Christian, here is a topic worthy of your conversation! Talk of the Glory of your Master’s Kingdom. Often speak of it while others amuse themselves with stories of sieges and battles. While they are speaking of this or that or the other event in history, tell them the history of the monarchy of the King of Kings! Speak to them concerning the fifth great monarchy in which Jesus Christ shall reign forever and ever!

But I must not forget to briefly hint at the other subject of the saints’ conversation—“and shall talk of Your power.” It is not simply of Christ’s Kingdom of which we are to speak, but also of His power. Here, again, the Psalmist gives us something which will help us to a division of our subject. In the 14th and 15th verses, mention is made of three kinds of power of which we ought to speak—“The Lord upholds all that fall, and raises up all those that are bowed down. The eyes of all wait upon You; and You give them their meat in due season.”

First, the Christian should speak of Christ’s upholding power. What a strange expression this is, “The Lord upholds all that fall!” Yet remember John Bunyan’s quaint old saying—

*“He that is down needs fear no fall;  
He that is low, no pride;  
He that is humble, ever shall  
Have God to be his guide.”*

So David Says, “The Lord upholds all that fall.” What a singular expression! How can He hold up those that fall? Yet those that fall, in this sense, are the only persons that stand! It is a remarkable paradox, but it is true. The man who stands on his feet and says, “I am mighty—I am strong enough to stand alone”—down he will go! But he who falls into Christ’s arms, he who says—

*“But, oh! for this no power have I,  
My strength is at Your feet to lie”—*  
that man shall not fall! We may well talk, then, of Christ’s upholding

power. Tell it to Christians—tell how He kept you when your feet were going swiftly to Hell. Tell how, when fierce temptations beset you, your Master drove them all away. Tell how, when the enemy was watching, He compassed you with His mighty strength. Tell how, when the arrows fell thickly around you, His mighty arm did hold the shield before you and so preserved you from them all. Tell how He saved you from death and delivered your feet from falling by making you, first of all, fall down prostrate before Him!

Next, talk of His exalting power—“He raises up all those that are bowed down.” Oh, how sweet it is, Beloved, sometimes to talk of God’s exalting power after we have been bowed down! I love to come into this pulpit and talk to you as I would in my own room. I make no pretensions to preaching at all, but simply tell you what I happen to feel just now. Oh, how sweet it is to feel the raisings of God’s Grace when you have been bowed down! Cannot some of us tell that when we have been bowed down beneath a bed of affliction, so that we could not even move, the everlasting arms have been around us and have lifted us up? When Satan has put his foot on our back, and we have said, “We shall never be raised up any more,” the Lord has come to our rescue! If we were only to talk on that subject in our conversation with one another, no Christian need have spiritless conversation in his parlor! But nowadays you are so afraid to speak of your own experience and the mercy of God to you, that you will talk any stuff and nonsense rather than that! I beseech you, if you would do good in the world, rehearse God’s deeds of raising up those that are bowed down.

Moreover, talk of God’s providing power—“The eyes of all wait upon You; and You give them their meat in due season.” We ought often to speak of how God provides for His creatures in Providence. Why should we not tell how God has taken us out of poverty and made us rich? Or, if He has not done that for us, how He has supplied our needs day by day in an almost miraculous manners? Some persons object to such a book as Huntington’s, “Bank of Faith,” and I have heard some respectable people call it, “The Bank of Nonsense.” Ah, if they had ever been brought into Huntington’s condition, they would see that it was, indeed, a bank of faith, and not a bank of nonsense—the nonsense is in those who read it in their unbelieving hearts, not in the book, itself! And he who has been brought into many straits and trials—and has been Divinely delivered out of them—would find that he could write a “Bank of Faith” as good as Huntington’s if he liked to do so, for he has had as many deliverances and he could write of the mighty acts of God who has opened His hands and supplied the needs of His needy child! Many of you have been out of work and you have cried to God to furnish you with employment—and He has! Have you not sometimes been brought so low, through painful affliction, that you could not rest? And could you not afterwards say, “I was brought low and He helped me”? Yes, “I was brought low, and He helped me out of my distress!” Yes, I see some of you nodding your heads, as much as to say, “We are the men who have passed through that experience. We have been brought into great straits, but the Lord has delivered us out of them all.”

Then do not be ashamed to tell the story! Let the world hear that God provides for His people! Go, speak of your Father. Do as the child does, who, when he has a little cake given to him, will take it out and say, “Father gave me this.” Do so with all your mercies! Go and tell all the world that you have a good Father, a gracious Father, a heavenly Provider! And though He gives you a hand-basket portion and you only live from hand to mouth, yet tell how graciously He gives it—and that you would not change your blest estate for all the world calls good or great!

II. I must be brief in speaking upon THE CAUSES WHICH WILL MAKE CHRISTIANS TALK OF THE GLORY OF CHRIST’S KINGDOM AND HIS POWER.

One cause is that it is the Kingdom of their own King. We do not expect French people to talk much about the victories of the English. And I suppose there is no Russian who would pay very many compliments to the prowess of our arms. But they will all talk about their own monarchs. Well, that is the reason why a Christian should speak of the Glory of his Master’s Kingdom and tell of His power because it is the Kingdom of his own King. Jesus Christ may be or may not be another man’s King, but, certainly He is mine! He is the Monarch to whom I yield absolute submission. I am no longer an alien and a stranger, but I am one of His subjects and I will talk concerning Him because He is my King.

Secondly, the Christian must talk of the King’s victories, because all those victories were won for him. He recollects that his Master never fought a battle for Himself—never slew an enemy for Himself. He slew them all for His people. And if for me—a poor abject worm—my Savior did this, shall I not talk of the Glory of His Kingdom, when He won all that glory for me? Will I not speak of His power, when all that power was exercised for me? It was all for me! When He died, He died for me. When He suffered, He suffered for me. And when He led captivity captive, He did it for me. Therefore, I must and will speak of His dear name! I cannot help testifying to the Glory of His Grace in whatever company I may be.

Again, the Christian must talk of it, because he himself has had a good share in fighting some of the battles. You know how old soldiers will “shoulder their crutch and tell how fields were won.” The soldier, home from the Crimea, when he reads the accounts of the war, says, “Ah, I know that trench! I worked in it myself. I know the Redan—I was one of the men who attacked it.” He is interested because he had a share in the battle. “Quorum pars magna fuji” said the old soldier, in the days of Virgil. So we, if we have had a part in the battle, like to talk concerning it. And, Beloved, it is this which makes our battles dear to us—we help to fight them. Though there was one battle which our great Captain fought alone, and “of the people there was none with Him,” yet, in other victories, He has permitted His people to help crush the dragon’s head. Remember that you have been a soldier in the army of the Lord and that, in the Last Day, when He gives away the medals in Heaven, you will have one! When He gives away the crowns, you will have one. We can talk about the battles, for we were in them! We can speak of the victories, for we helped to win them! It is to our own praise as well as to our Master’s when we talk of His wondrous acts!

But the best reason why the Christian should talk of his Master is this—if he has Christ in his heart, the Truth of God must come out—he cannot help it. The best reason in all the world is the woman’s reason, who said she should do it because she would do it. So it often happens that the Christian cannot give us much reason why he must talk about his Savior except that he cannot help it, and he will not try to help it! It is in him, and it must come out. If God has put a fire inside a man’s heart, do you think it can be kept down? If we have Grace in our souls, will it never come out in conversation? God does not put His candles in lanterns through which they cannot be seen, but He sets them on candlesticks. He does not build His cities in valleys, but He puts them on hills so that they cannot be hid. So He will not allow His Grace to be concealed.

A Christian cannot help being discovered. None of you ever knew a secret Believer—a secret Christian. “Oh,” you say, “I am sure I have known such a man.” But look, he could not have been a secret Believer! If you knew him, he could not be wholly secret! The fact that you knew him proves that he could not have been a secret Christian. If a man says that nobody knows a thing and yet he knows it, he contradicts himself. You cannot, then, know a secret Believer, and you never will. There may be, indeed, some who are secret for a time, but they always have to come out, like Joseph of Arimathaea, when he went and begged for the body of Jesus. Ah, there are some of you sitting in your pews who fancy I shall never discover you, but I shall see you in the vestry, by-and-by! Some of you keep on coming Sunday after Sunday, and you say, “Well, I must go, by-and-by, and make a profession of faith.” Yes, you will not be able to sit there long—if you have the Grace of God within you, you will be obliged to come out and put on the Lord Jesus Christ by being baptized in His name! Why not do so without further delay? If you love your Lord’s name, come out at once, and acknowledge it!

III. Lastly, WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT OF OUR TALKING MORE OF CHRIST’S KINGDOM AND POWER?  
The first effect would be that the world would believe us more. The world says, “What a parcel of hypocrites Christian people are!” And they are about right concerning a good many of you. The world says, “Why, just look at them! They profess a deal of religion, but if you hear them talk, they do not speak differently from other people. They sing loudly enough, it is true, when they go to church or chapel, but when do you hear them sing at home? They go to the Prayer Meeting, but have they a Prayer Meeting at their own family altar? Believe them to be Christians? No! Their lives give the lie to their doctrines and we do not believe them.” If we more often talked of Christ, I am sure the world would think us to be better Christians and they would, no doubt, say so.  
Again, if our conversations were more concerning Christ, we, as Christians, should grow faster and be more happy. What is the reason of the bickering and jealousies between Christians? It is because they do not know one another. Mr. Jay used to tell a story about a man going out, one foggy morning, and seeing something coming in the fog. He thought it was a monster. But, by-and-by, as he came nearer, he exclaimed, “Oh, dear me! That’s my Brother John!” So it often happens, when we see people at a distance and hold no spiritual conversation with them, we think they are monsters. But when we begin to talk together and get near to one another, we say, “Why, it is Brother John, after all!” There are more true Brothers and Sisters about us than we dream of. Then, I say, let your conversation, in all companies, wherever you may be, be so seasoned with salt that a man may know you to be a Christian. In this way, you would remove bickering better than by all the sermons that could be preached—and be promoting a true Evangelical Alliance far more excellent and efficient than all the alliances which man can form!  
Again, if we more often talked of Christ like this, how useful we might be in the salvation of souls! O Beloved, how few souls have some of you won to Christ! It says, in the Canticles, “There is not one barren among them.” But are not some of you barren—without spiritual children? It was pronounced as a curse upon one of old that he should die childless. Oh, I think that though the Christian is always blessed, it is half a curse to die spiritually childless! There are some of you who are childless tonight. You never were the means of the conversion of a soul in all your lives. You hardly remember having tried to win anyone for the Savior. You are good religious people so far as your outward conduct is concerned. You go to the House of God, but you never concern yourselves about winning souls for Jesus! O my God, let me die when I can no longer be the means of saving souls! If I can be kept out of Heaven a thousand years, if you will give me souls as my wages, let me still speak for You! But if there are no more sinners to be converted—no more to be brought in by my ministry—then let me depart and be “with Christ, which is far better.”  
Oh, think of the crowns that are in Heaven! “They that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.” So many souls, so many gems! Have you ever thought what it would be to wear in Heaven a starless crown? All the saints will have crowns, but those who win souls will have a star in their crown for every soul! Some of you, my Friends, will wear a crown without a star—would you like that? You will be happy, you will be blessed, you will be satisfied, I know, when you will be there, but can you bear the thought of dying childless—of having none in Heaven who shall be begotten unto Christ by you—never having travailed in birth for souls—never having brought any to Christ? How can you bear to think of it?  
Then, if you would win souls, Beloved, talk about Jesus! There is nothing like talking of Him to lead others to Him. I read of the conversion of a servant, the other day. She was asked how she came to know the Lord. “Well,” she said, “my master, at dinner, happened to make some simple observation to his sister across the table.” The remark certainly was not addressed to the servant—and her master had no notion that she was listening—yet his word was blessed to her! It is well to talk behind the door that which you do not mind hearing afterwards in the street! It is good to speak that in the closet which you are not ashamed to listen to from the housetop, for you will have to listen to it from the housetop, by-and-by, when God shall come and call you to account for every idle word you have spoken!  
Souls are often converted through godly conversation. Simple words frequently do more good than long sermons. Disjointed, unconnected sentences are often of more use than the most finely polished periods or rounded sentences. If you would be useful, let the praises of Christ be always on your tongue. Let Him live on your lips. Speak of Him always! When you walk by the way, when you sit in your house, when you rise up and even when you lie down, it may be that you have someone to whom it is possible that you may yet whisper the Gospel of the Grace of God! Many a sister has been brought to know the Savior by a sister’s pleadings that were only heard in the silence of the night. God give you, Beloved, to fulfill our text—“They shall speak of the Glory of Your Kingdom, and talk of Your power.” They shall do it, mark you—God will make you do it if you are His people. Go and do it willingly! Begin, from this time forth, and keep on doing it forever!  
Say, concerning other conversation, Be gone from here! Be gone! This shall be my constant and only theme. Be like the harp of old Anacreon which would never sound any other note but that of love. The harpist wished to sing of Cadmus and of mighty men of wisdom, but his harp would resound of love alone. Be, then, like Anacreon’s harp—sing of Christ alone! Christ alone! Christ alone! Jesus, Jesus only! Make Him the theme of your conversation, for “they shall speak of the Glory of Your Kingdom, and talk of Your power.” God give you Grace so to do, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 137.**

Verses 1, 2. By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yes, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. Babylon was full of canals and rivers. The captive Israelites sought out lonely places where they might be away from their oppressors and might, in the company of their countrymen, pour out the sad stream of their griefs and sorrows. “The rivers of Babylon” seemed congenial to them and they mingled their tears with the flowing waters. They “sat down” as if they felt they were to be there a long while and were not soon to go back to their own land. And they “wept”—not simply because of their banishment and their woes, but also because of the mournful condition of their beloved Zion, which had been ravaged by the Chaldeans, plowed as a field and given over to desolation. Some of these poor captives had been singers in the courts of the Lord’s House which had been burnt with fire. And others had brought their “harps” with them into their captivity, but they could not find any music in their hearts and, therefore, they fetched no sweet notes out of their harp strings. They did not break their harps, however, for they might need them some day, so they hung them up on the weeping willows which abounded by the water. Then came one of the sharpest trials they had ever had—a piece of bitter cruelty on the part of their oppressors who had no compassion upon the poor prisoners whom they had taken from their own land.

3. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. As no cups except those that were taken out of God’s holy House would do for Belshazzar when he wanted to make himself drunk, so no music would suit these heathen captors of Israel but the songs of God’s House—“Sing us one of the songs of Zion.” These poor people were crestfallen and utterly broken, yet their enemies cried,” Make mirthful music for us, sing us one of your sacred songs.” They only wanted to laugh at it, or, at the very best, to listen to it simply as a piece of music that they might criticize, so they said, “Sing us one of the songs of Zion.” But the captives could not and would not sing for any such purpose. Zion’s songs were not meant to be sung for mere amusement, nor were her chants intended to be made the theme of mockery and ridicule by the ungodly.

4, 5. How shall we sing the LORD’S song in a strange land? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. “No,” they said, “if we were to make mirth for the Babylonians, we would be doing serious damage to Zion, we should be traitors to Jerusalem.” So the harpers said, “Sooner than we will play a tune to make mirth for you, let our right hands become paralyzed.”

6 *.*If I do not remember you, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth. They said it, each one, for himself—they would sooner be dumb than sing these sacred songs for the amusement of the ungodly revelers who had gathered round them. Instead of a song, they offered a prayer which must have sounded terrible in the ears of those who mocked them. It was a fierce prayer—a prayer made under a very different dispensation from that under which we live—a prayer by a patriot who had seen his wife murdered and his children dashed to pieces—and he prayed thus—

6, 7. If I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy. Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said, Raze it, raze it, even to the foundation! Those Edomites, who ought to have been like brothers to the Jews, were their most ferocious enemies, and they stirred up the Chaldeans to be more terribly cruel than they otherwise would have been.

8, 9. O daughter of Babylon, who are to be destroyed: happy shall the one who repays you as you have served us. Happy shall be the one who takes and dashes your little ones against the stones. For these people had gone all over the world, wherever they could, murdering and mutilating. Tens of thousands of little children had they brutally killed, multitudes of women had they ravished, a vast number of cities had they destroyed! They were the scourges of all nations and, therefore, moved to righteous indignation, the Jews felt that anybody who should overthrow that city of Babylon and put to death its inhabitants would be doing good service to the rest of mankind. And, mark you, all this came to pass in due time. When Cyrus turned aside the waters of the river which had been Babylon’s great protection, and left the riverbed quite dry, he marched his troops right into the center of the city! And when the Babylonians, to defend themselves and a part of the city, were driven to great straits, we are told by historians that they destroyed their own wives and children, calling them useless mouths, that they might be able to defend themselves a little longer from the sword of Cyrus, so that, literally, it came to pass that the man who had destroyed his own children thought himself happy to be rid of them that he might maintain the fight.

How dreadful is God when He deals with nations that have been cruel and ferocious! Go to Babylon this day, and see what ruinous heaps He has made, what desolation He has worked in that land.

—Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #1828 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

HOW “THE UNSPEAKABLE” IS SPOKEN OF  
NO. 1828

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, MARCH 15, 1885, DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON OCTOBER 9, 1884.

**“And men shall speak of the might of Your terrible acts: and I will declare Your greatness. They shall abundantly utter the memory of Your great goodness, and shall sing of Your righteousness.” Psalm 145:6, 7.**

In this Psalm David has reached the Beulah land of his songs where we hear nothing else but praise. He begins, “I will extol You, my God, O King; and I will bless Your name forever and ever. Every day will I bless You; and I will praise Your name forever and ever.” And he closes with, “My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord: and let all flesh bless His holy name forever and ever.” Happy is our condition when the glory of God fills both heart and tongue! Oh, to swim in a sea of gratitude, to feel waves of praise breaking over one’s joyful head—and then to dive into the ocean of adoration and lose one’s self in the ever-blessed God!

The royal singer strikes a high note as he repeats the stanza, “Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable.” We never reach the height of that great argument until we confess that it is far above us and altogether unsearchable. We have not apprehended God if we imagine that we have comprehended Him.

Next David found comfort in the thought that he was not the only worshipper of the Lord and that the praise of God would not cease when he fell asleep in death. He foresees an endless line of praiseful hearts and utters this sure prophecy, “One generation shall praise Your works to another, and shall declare Your mighty acts.” But, as if he would not and could not leave the blessed task to others, but must continue his own joyful hallelujahs, he cries, “I will speak of the glorious honor of Your majesty, and of Your wondrous works.” Whatever happens, we must, each one, extol the Lord! Whether the world grows atheistic or devout, our duty and our joy are one and the same—we are still to magnify the Lord our God. We do not wish to avoid this profound pleasure; no, rather we would abound in it more and more!

All this leads up to a consideration of the various ways in which men speak of the Lord and His acts when their minds are moved in that direction. All see not the same points of His greatness, neither do they see with the same eyes, nor speak in the same spirit. It is ours, at this time, to review the various orders of mankind, and to observe how the revelation of God to them affects their minds and moves their tongues. There is an ascending scale in the four sentences of our text, as the poet-Prophet observes and records the ascending forms of human thought and speech.

I. We begin at the lowest step of the ladder. “Men shall speak of the might of Your terrible acts.” We mingle with the multitude during a great occasion of national calamity, or upon the receipt of thrilling news from a foreign land—and we hear THE AWE-STRUCK TALK of the throng. We join a sobered and thoughtful company—they have come together under a common fear and they speak, one to another, of the terrible acts of God because they impress them at the moment. They are of the Athenian kind, desiring continually to say and hear some new thing, and now they have found a novel subject which has the piquant devour of terror. God has been doing terrible things and they cannot help speaking of them—they have overlooked His mercies, but they must notice His judgments, as it is written, “Lord, when Your hand is lifted up, they will not see; but they shall see and be ashamed.” Not only shall they see, but they shall speak, too—“Men shall speak of the might of Your terrible acts.”

There have been times in human history when this text has been fulfilled with tremendous emphasis. The first men who lived after the flood must have been affected with the solemn memory of the universal deluge. They must have often spoken to one another concerning God’s terrible acts, when He drew up the sluices of the great deep and burst open the reservoirs of Heaven to drown a guilty world. They that dwelt over against the five cities of the plain, once so prosperous and rich, withal so luxurious and vicious—they, I say, that dwelt in the neighboring cities must have said, one to another, “Have you heard what has happened—how God has rained fire out of Heaven upon those wicked cities?” Men, after all these ages, can scarcely go that way and mark how desolation rules over the Dead Sea, without speaking in bated breath to one another, and saying, “Here vengeance triumphed.”

Egypt was full of this talk, once, when the plagues followed each other like terrible claps of thunder. One peal had not ceased before another blast astounded them! The noise thereof went beyond Egypt and, in many a palace, monarchs heard how Jehovah had gotten unto Himself honor upon Pharaoh. It was as Moses sang, “Then the dukes of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away. Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of Your arm they shall be as still as a stone; till Your people pass over, O Lord, till the people pass over, which you have purchased.”

So was it, also, when the sword of Joshua was taken from its scabbard in the name of the Most High, and Jehovah began to deal out execution against the nations that had gone into uncleanness and given themselves over to abominable lusts. When Israel went from city to city, as the appointed executioner of the Most High, then men everywhere spoke, one to another, of the might of Jehovah’s terrible acts, “until their hearts melted, neither was there spirit in them anymore.”

These are but early instances in the gray old past, but they are typical of like judgments which are scattered throughout history. The terrible acts of the Lord are few, but no age is quite left without them, for the Lord still lives and He is always the same. He punishes nations in this present life. Seeing that there will be no resurrection for nations as nations, and no Judgment Day for nations as nations, they are judged in time and their sins are followed up by national judgments. Have you not heard of the might of His terrible acts that happened to Babylon? Know you not that He made Nineveh to be such a heap of ruins that for many a century it was altogether hidden away from mortal sight?

Have you not heard what God did to the colossal empire of Rome, when it had filled up the measure of its iniquity? Do you not remember how He broke it in pieces as with a rod of iron? No Englishman should ever forget, in modern times, how the Armada of Spain was given as chaff to the wind and that cruel, persecuting power was degraded from her pre-eminence. Men have spoken, again and again, to one another as they have hidden away from the scourge of war, or as they have stood weeping at the graves of their beloved ones slain by the pestilence which walks in darkness. And they have said, “Behold the might of Jehovah’s terrible acts!” Men will speak of that side of the Lord’s dealings if they are dumb concerning His innumerable benefits.

When God’s judgments are abroad in the world, the inhabitants shall learn righteousness. And this is a consolation in times of disaster and death. None of us would dare to desire these judgments— we are of another spirit from Elijah, who, in holy jealousy for Jehovah, His God, could pray that there should be no rain by the space of three years except according to his word. But yet, the thought must have crossed the mind of many a faithful follower of God that atheistic nations ought to feel the rod to startle them into thoughts of God and oppressing peoples ought, themselves, to taste the bitter cup of tyranny. “By terrible things in righteousness will You answer us, O God.” “Shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him?” Will He not smite the beast and the false prophet and put down falsehood and wickedness? It shall be so in due time!

The least that we can do, whenever these terrible acts are abroad, is to turn them into special prayer and cry mightily to God that men may speak of the might of His terrible acts and may learn to, “kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and they perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little.” It behooves us, when we see the black clouds overhead, to pray that they may break in mercy upon the nations and that God, Himself, may appear in infinite love, though He should make the clouds His chariot and ride upon the wings of the wind.

“Men shall speak of the might of Your terrible acts.” These things leave a mark and make, for a while, a manifest impression. Such, however, is the heart of man that oftentimes the impression is as when one lashes the water and no scar remains, for it is natural to fallen man to forget God! Sinners pray in a storm and curse, again, in the calm. When the pestilence is abroad, they tremble and adore—but they become atheists when the graves are all filled—and things return to their usual course. When God sends forth pestilence, (and He has of late scourged cities that are scarcely a day’s ride from us), let us pray that the scourge may not fall upon our own land. Yet I do remember, when first I came to this city, how many days and nights I stood at the bedside of men and women dying of cholera. And though it was a grievous thing and this neighborhood felt the scourge very heavily, yet I noticed that infidelity was singularly quiet and that persons who never entered a place of worship, before, began to attend our services.

Bibles were routed out of the dust in those times and religious talk was tolerated. The minister, who was formerly the subject of their caricatures and jokes, was viewed with reverence, for the time being, and his visits were sought for in the hour of sickness. It is amazing how men laugh on the other side of their mouths when God begins to deal with them—how those who scoffed the loudest are the first to wince when the lash falls on them! The boldest blasphemers are the first to cry out when the Lord binds them with His cords. They cannot bear the touch of God’s finger and yet they have often dared to challenge His hand to be laid upon them! O Lord, men shall speak of the might of Your terrible acts when they are driven in utter dismay to bow their ungodly heads and acknowledge that the Lord reigns!

Dear Friends, whenever you find sickness in a house, or death in a darkened chamber, seize the opportunity to speak for your Lord. Your voice for the Truth of God will likely be heard, for God Himself is speaking, and men must hear Him whether they will or not! Meanwhile, plead earnestly that the hammer of God may only break hard hearts and that the fire of God may consume nothing but that which is evil. Pray that the Holy Spirit may work with the chastisement to produce health and healing to the souls of men.

II. Be ready with the second part of our subject, which is this—THE BOLD DISCOURSE. Observe how the one follows the other—“Men shall speak of the might of Your terrible acts: and I will declare Your greatness.” After the many have spoken in awe, I will deliver my soul with courage. Come in, O single testifier for God, for now you will be welcomed! When they have advanced so far as to tremble at God because He has begun to smite them, you step forward and declare His greatness! The might of His terrible acts has made them see the greatness of His power—they perceive what plagues are in His quiver and how easily He can draw them forth like arrows, shoot them from His bow—and never miss the mark! They are obliged to confess all this and thus a good groundwork is prepared for something more.

Tell them of the greatness of His justice and how He will by no means spare the guilty. Tell them of the greatness of His Grace and how, in the Person of Jesus Christ, He passes by iniquity, transgression and sin. Tell them of the greatness of His fatherly love and how He presses returning prodigals to His bosom and kisses away their tears. Tell them of the greatness of His saving power to lift up men from the dunghill and set them among princes, even the princes of His people! Speak exceedingly brave concerning the greatness of His sovereignty, how He can create or can destroy. Tell them that, “He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion.” Point to the greatness and splendor of His love—how He receives sinners, how He gives Grace to the graceless and how His Son, in due time, died for the ungodly.

I heard it said of a certain preacher by one who was no ill judge, though a simple countryman, “I have heard many preachers, but I never heard one that seemed to make God so great as that man does.” I would like to have such praise, or at least, to deserve it, for I think it should be the main objective of the preacher to make God great in men’s esteem. Today, my Brothers and Sisters, the most approved preaching makes much of man. Philanthropy, which is good enough in its place, has supplanted loyalty to Jehovah! The Second Table of the Law of God is put before the First and, in that position, it genders idolatry—the worship of man—which is only a form of self-adoration. All divinity is now to be shaped according to man and from man’s point of view. And men are to think out their theology and not take it from God’s mouth, or from the Book inspired by the Spirit of God.

Men are such wonderful beings in this 19th Century that we are called upon to tone down the Gospel to “the spirit of the age”—that is, to the fashions and the follies of human thought, as they vary from day to day! This, by God’s help, we will never do—no, not by one diluting drop, nor by the splitting of a hair! What have I to do with suiting the 19th Century any more than the 9th Century? We have to do with the Immutable God and with the fixed Truths which He has revealed to us! Having taken our foothold upon the Rock, we shall not stir from it, by God’s help, while there is breath in our body. Yet so it is—man has made man his god and Jehovah is dethroned in his thoughts. I believe in God, the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob—if there is another god, newly come up, let those worship him who will—my resolve is to always magnify the stern God of the Old Testament, the loving God of the New Testament!

Time may yet come when men will hear the old Gospel once more, but whether they do or not, I will declare Jehovah’s greatness! There are many shifts and changes, but if we stand still and bide our time, the current which runs this way, today, will set in an opposite direction tomorrow! And if it should not do so, what is that to us? We are not accountable for popular opinion, but only for our own loyalty to the Truth of God! He who is faithful to his God and declares His greatness in this evil time, shall be accepted as a faithful servant in the day of the last account. Of course he will be stigmatized, today, as, “behind the times,” and be little esteemed by those who deem themselves cultured and advanced, but of this he may make small account.

Thus I have taken you over two of the sentences. I have shown you an awe-struck people talking together of God’s terrible acts and then the child of God coming in with his personal testimony, saying, “I will declare Your greatness.”

III. In the third sentence you see a company of godly people together and in their talk you mark THE GRATEFUL OUTPOURING of thankful spirits. “They shall abundantly utter the memory of Your great goodness.”

The Hebrew word has something to do with bubbling up—it means they shall overflow, they shall gush with the memory of Your great goodness— and in handling this sentence I should like to dwell only upon that metaphor. A Christian man in reference to the goodness of God to him should resemble a springing well. There should always be fresh matter from him upon that blessed subject—“the memory of Your great goodness.” Did you ever tell the story of your life to the fullest to anybody? Did you ever write it? I am sometimes not a little amused, certainly not surprised, when I get, as I did this week, a letter upon foolscap [large sheet of paper measuring 13 by 6 inches]—both sides, 24 pages—all filled up with the story of a man I never saw, who lives far away in the backwoods. Nothing will do but he must tell somebody or other what God has done for him and he has selected me to be the receiver of the narrative!

He has only followed the example of many others. I regret that so many of these autobiographies come to me, for such good things ought to be a little more evenly distributed. I have scarcely the time to get through that length of writing and, having so many other epistles, it is possible that I am not as grateful for this one as I ought to be. But it is a good theme of which we cannot weary. I would encourage all Believers to abundantly utter what they remember of the Lord’s love—and if they cannot tell it viva voce, they must write it. You need not send me the manuscript—but do not let it be lost. Tell your friends the happy tale of Jesus and His love!—

*“Oh, bless the Lord, my Soul,  
Nor let His mercies lie  
Forgotten in unthankfulness,  
And without praises die.”*

I like the instinct (and I think it is always an instinct of a child of God) that makes a man feel, “I must tell what the Lord has done for me.”

They shall abundantly utter, they shall gush, they shall overflow with the memory of Your great goodness. Now, if somebody could give you all his time to listen to you about what God has done for you, could you not keep on forever? I was about to blunder and say I could keep on forever, and then begin again! I feel like David, when he said that he would praise God’s name forever and then said, “and ever,” as if he could spend two “forevers” in God’s praise. We can never exhaust it. We may tell it forever and yet it shall remain untold. It is so fresh, so new, that no fountain can excel it.

See, too, how freely a true testimony of holy experience is given out by grateful Believers. It is refreshing to yourself to proclaim it. Fountains never grudge their streams—they sparkle and they flash, their crystal diamonds glitter in the sunlight—they are things of beauty and joys forever. Even so it is a holy recreation to let our gratitude well up and overflow to the praise of God. Is it not a refreshment to those who come within the sound of it? Oftentimes you might relieve a Brother’s woe if you told him how God relieved you. There may be sitting in your own pew some person with a very heavy heart whom you could readily relieve if your tongue were not frost-bitten. Oh, that out of the midst of your soul would flow rivers of living water! Child of God, you may be carrying in your bosom that key of Doubting Castle which will open every door and will not only let you out of it, but your companion in tribulation, too, so that the two of you shall come forth and fairly escape from the giant by the use of the key!

They shall abundantly utter, they shall overflow with the memory of Your great goodness, O Lord! Does not this imply a measure of continuance? Let us now praise the Lord. Use your memory at this hour. Go over your life story. You have not kept a diary. I suppose not, I almost hope not, for such daily records are apt to grow stilted. People feel that they must put something down every day and, perhaps, they write the most when they have least to say. But, at any rate, in your memory you ought to retain the recollection of the Lord’s deeds of love and Grace to you—and you should utter them as they come fresh to your memory at this moment.

Such utterances would help us in reference to the former sentences of the text. When men are speaking of the terrible acts of God with bated breath, then you come in and say, “But He is good! These acts of judgment are few and far between. It is not often that we have a thunderstorm. What soft, bright mornings; what clear days; what dewy evenings we have and only now and then a tempest!” Tell them of God’s great goodness. And when, at other times you have declared His greatness, it will be wise to change the strain and soften down the terror of His grandeur by speaking of the majesty of His love. I do not think you should abundantly utter His terrible acts—you need not abundantly utter His greatness, but you may dwell with peculiar emphasis, freeness and fullness upon His goodness—His goodness to you! This third rung of our ladder is a golden one and I am loath to leave it, for it is my joy to utter the memory of the Lord’s great goodness to me.

IV. And now, you see, all the while it has been talk, but now, in the fourth part, we rise a stage higher, for we come to singing. Listen to THE SELECT SONG. “They shall abundantly utter the memory of Your great goodness, and shall sing of Your righteousness.”

When good men talk of God, they soon find that the tongue leaps with liberty, for the strings that held it are broken. Then they cannot be satisfied with talking to men—they must rise to something better and talk with God in holy song. “They shall sing.” Singing is the language of joy, the special vehicle of praise, the chosen speech of Heaven! Singing is language married to music, words winged with melody. Verily the Lord’s redeemed may well have much of it, for it every way becomes their state and their prospects. “O come, let us sing unto the Lord.”

But is not this a very singular text? Do you not wonder at the subject of their song? “They shall sing of Your righteousness.” You remember in the 51st Psalm, David says, “My tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness”? That is a strange theme. Why didn’t he say, “They shall sing of the memory of Your great goodness”? Certainly that is a choice topic for song, but yet the more select, the higher subject for music, is the righteousness of God. Is it not a singular choice? Probably a large part of my audience will not understand how it can be regarded as a joyful subject. The righteousness of God is a theme of terror to many—they wish He were not righteous! He will by no means spare the guilty, but will hold His plummet to every bowing wall and tottering fence. And His hail shall sweep away all the refuges of lies! And because of this, men dread the Lord and turn away from Him! And yet, you see, there are hearts that can sing of His righteousness and who, having other themes, having God’s terrible acts, having God’s greatness, having God’s goodness to sing of, yet prefer this for their song—“They shall sing of Your righteousness.”

What is there to sing about in this?  
Before I answer that question, I want you to notice how this subject of God’s righteousness is put and how it is connected. Let me read you the sentence before it and the sentence afterwards, and you will see how this singing of His righteousness is, so to speak, sandwiched in between two other themes. Look, now—“They shall abundantly utter the memory of Your great goodness, and shall sing of Your righteousness. The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger and of great mercy.” Here are two cakes of honey and my text is put between them. Here is a blessed supper for you at this hour if you do but know how to feed upon it! Between the two testimonies of goodness and of Grace comes in this of righteousness—and I greatly delight in the thought that the great subject of song, here, is a righteousness which is encompassed about with goodness—a righteousness which does not hinder compassion!  
This righteousness is surrounded by mercy and, therefore, the mercy is not unrighteous, but is strictly just. Oh, Friends, the very glory of the Gospel is that righteousness and peace have kissed each other in it—that the sword of justice is not snapped across the knee of mercy, but it is sheathed in the scabbard of the Atonement, there to abide in its majestic rest, never to be brought out again to smite a soul for whom Christ has died! Oh, the joy of getting hold of a righteousness perfectly consistent with the goodness and Grace of God!  
What is there concerning this righteousness that we are able to sing about? Just let me enlarge upon it for a minute or two. I count it a very great joy to every Christian that God is essentially righteous. What an awful thing it would be to have an unrighteous God! If the heathen who worshipped Jupiter, for instance, had sat down and deliberately studied the character of Jupiter, as taught to them by their own priests, they would have felt it a degrading thing to be under the rule of such a detestable being as Jove was said to be. A licentious god—fancy that! An unrighteous god who could do what he pleased and pleased to do iniquity! What a horror!  
God in His infinite sovereignty is to be admired because it is not possible for Him, in the exercise of His sovereignty, to do anything that is unrighteous! No creature of His shall ever have just cause to blame the deeds of the Most High. He does as He wills and He gives no account of what He does, for He has absolute dominion and none can call Him to his bar—but His will is holiness, justice and righteousness—and His Being is love. I delight to think that I serve a righteous God. An unrighteous God? That were to remove the foundations upon which all things must rest, for, after all, the Character of God must be the basis of our confidence. If He were not righteous, what reliance could we place upon Him? His promises of Grace might be broken; His Covenant might be a fiction; the Atonement, itself, might turn out to be a sham and save nobody—unless the contract involved in it had been made by a righteous God.  
He is righteous! Let us be sure of it and sing about it—righteous in all that He reveals. There is no Revelation of God in the Bible, or anywhere else, that is unrighteous. A man says, “This is revealed to me, but it is not consistent with the perfect righteousness of God.” We know that he sees not the Light of God at all and knows not what he says! There is nothing revealed by God concerning Himself and His dealings with men but what is perfectly righteous “The Word of the Lord is pure.”  
Again, there is nothing commanded by Him but what is perfectly righteous. He has not commanded sin—He has not in, all those Ten Commandments put down a single precept which is contrary to integrity. Everything that He bids us do is safe to do, for it is right and just. If He is a holy Master, so is His service perfect holiness.  
Neither is God unrighteous in His decrees. We cannot climb to Heaven and turn over those folded leaves, where everything that is, and has been and is yet to be, will be found written by His prescient pen—but there is nothing in those decrees which savors of injustice. We may be sure of that. Nothing could come forth from the heavenly court but that which is perfectly right and just. And this makes us sing—we feel right glad that everything can be trusted with our Lord and King. He shall judge the world in righteousness and the people with His Truth. Let Him do what He wills and ordain what He pleases—our spirit bows before Him and cries, “It is the Lord, let Him do what seems good to Him,” for “the Lord is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works,” and blessed be His name forever!

It is the same with God’s doings. The Lord has never performed an unrighteous act. I want you people of God, especially, to feel this, so that if you have lost anyone very dear to you, you may hold your peace, like Aaron, even if you cannot go further and bless the Lord in the midst of your trials. Nothing harsh or unduly severe has come from the Divine hand. He has not dealt with you according to your desert, for if He had done so, you would be, now, where His mercy is gone forever! Beloved, let us feel that this is a settled point, concerning which no question can be raised. Let us have no quarrels with God! I would not merely say that He is righteous to you, His dear people, but more, that He is invariably tender and kind. That surgeon’s knife of His does but remove a cancer. That bitter medicine does but heal you of a disease that otherwise would be your death. Therefore, accept all that comes from God and kiss the hand that smites and honor the lips which upbraid.  
And here is matter to sing about. The Lord is righteous in all His judgments. You may not need this fact at the present, but you may require it in some darker hour when you lie under a false charge and your defense is not believed. You have been doing your best in your situation, but you are accused of dishonesty and you cannot clear yourself. Perhaps the circumstantial evidence is against you, though you are as innocent of the deed as the Angels of Light. If you have faith enough, you may now sing of the righteousness of God. Some of us have sung of it when everybody has misrepresented us and we have been sustained thereby. It little matters what men say, for they are not our judges. To our own Master we stand or fall! The Lord is righteous and we can afford to leave our case in His hands—He will defend the right and rectify the wrong. If we have acted with single-eyed honesty and uprightness, we may appeal to His court and calmly abide in His decision. He will execute judgment for the oppressed and, therefore, the children of God sing concerning His righteousness.  
But the loudest song and the sweetest is concerning the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. He would not, even to save His own elect, do an unjust thing! Even that His mercy might be glorified, He would not stain His justice. Forth came His Son, His other Self, to take upon Himself the nature of man, that man’s guilt might be imputed to Him and that He might bear the penalty upon the Cross. The Cross is, at once, the loudest proclamation of Divine righteousness and the most plain proof of Divine love! The Lord is able to save to the uttermost, but He is not able to retract His declaration, “The soul that sins, it shall die.” He must punish, even though He must pardon. It is necessary that the authority of Law should be sustained and, therefore, the Lord will not withdraw from the execution of justice upon the ungodly though it is His strange work and He desires it not. On His Son He has executed justice for all those who are in Him. The Man, Christ Jesus, was the federal Head of His own chosen and He has borne their grief and carried their sorrows. He has finished their transgression and made an end of their sin—and brought in for them an everlasting righteousness.  
And now, at this time, I want you to sing of the Divine righteousness, because the righteousness of Christ is yours. If you are Believers, you can joyfully wrap yourselves up in the righteousness of God, Himself! “This is the name wherewith she shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness.” See Jeremiah 33:16. Notice the feminine—it is not, “wherewith He shall be called,” but, “wherewith she shall be called.” The wife takes the husband’s name—the Church is named after Christ, her Bridegroom. It is a wonderful sentence to be in God’s Book—that His Church shall bear His name and Jesus Christ, the Eternal God, shall become the righteousness of poor sinners like ourselves! He is made of God unto us, righteousness at this hour. “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Let us sing in our hearts concerning that glorious wedding dress which adorns us, at this very moment, and shall adorn us in the day when we enter into the joy of our Lord!  
“They shall sing of His righteousness.” If you do not sing about the righteousness which God imputes to you, when will you sing?— *“Jesus, Your blood and righteousness  
My beauty are, my glorious dress;  
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,  
With joy shall I lift up my head.”*  
But I must close, and I want, therefore, to say to you, dear Friends, that I conceive this singing of God’s righteousness to be the choicest evidence of real conversion, reconciliation to God and of likeness so God. If we were more sanctified, we should be less tempted to quibble at the righteousness of God. Here is a man who takes down his Bible and he reads, “These shall go away into everlasting punishment.” “Can’t stand it,” he says. It is because you do not fully know the mind of God, or else, terrible as it is, you would say, “It must be right if God determines it.” Instead of that, the man assumes to judge God and dares to weigh the Word of God in his scales and say, “This does not suit my inner consciousness and, therefore, it is wrong.” Is our inner consciousness infallible? Is Revelation a nose of wax to be shaped by our inner whimsies? When a man once alters the Word of God a little, within a year he alters it again!  
I have noticed brethren who have began their wanderings from orthodoxy with the life-in-Christ theory and who have now reached the restitution of all things, devils included! Why preachers who believe this last theory keep on preaching, I do not know, for there is no practical reason why they should! If what they say is untrue, they had better hold their tongues. And if what they say is true, their occupation is gone, for clearly, it is only a matter of time and everybody will come right! Let people swear and live as they like—what difference can it make if, in a short time, they will all be restored? As well be wicked as righteous, since, in the long run, one shall be as the other!  
I see how it is. God’s Word is nothing—these new notions are everything. The modern men blot out what they like and tear out what they please from the Book. Or they lay the Book aside altogether—for they, themselves, make their own bible and every man is his own inspiration and will, before long, proclaim himself to be his own god. But when the soul is brought to know God, it does not question His Word or His doings any longer. It sits down before a great mystery and cries, “I do not understand this! I cannot measure it. Oh, the depths! But what God says I believe. What God does I accept.”  
Brothers and Sisters, let me not deceive you by pandering to the idle prattle of the times. Men dream and then assert that their visions are the Truth of God. If there is anything of conjecture and of “larger hope,” so be it. I may conjecture and I may imagine—but for me to preach my conjectures and my imaginations as doctrines would be damnable! It is an atrocious disloyalty to the majesty of Revelation to add to it the maunderings of our poor fallible judgments! The better thing is always to feel as a little child at his father’s knee when we are reading the Scriptures—and to ask to be taught of the Spirit. Whatever the Truth of God may be, I shall never quarrel with God! However terrible His acts, if I am unable to rejoice in the Light of His face, yet in the shadow of His wings will I rejoice!  
When He seems to spread that great wing and hide the sun, I will go and nestle beneath Him and cry, “It is the Lord, and it must be right.” Paul was known to silence those who had objections to offer concerning the ways of the Lord—he did not argue, but he simply said—“No but, O man, who are you that replies against God?” “Bad argument,” modern thinkers dare to say. Yet it is the best that such people deserve and the best that Inspiration deigns to offer them. The cricket on the hearth is not to be debated with when it questions the sun for shining, or the thunders for having a voice louder than its own.  
My Brethren, say, each one of you, unto the Lord, “I will sing of Your righteousness.” It is an awful Truth of God! It is a Truth that makes me tremble as I utter it; but I read in the Revelation, concerning those that are tormented day and night, that it is, “in the presence of the holy angels, and in the Presence of the Lamb.” Whatever that torment may be, it must be right. Nothing in the presence of the angels of God can be contrary to their joy over repenting sinners—nothing in the Presence of the Lamb can be contrary to His ineffable love! The Lord shall judge the world by that same Jesus who came into the world that the world, by Him, might be saved. Love will inflict the sentence of justice. Nothing with regard to the future of the impenitent can come from God but that which will be supremely righteous. It is not for us to explain to others, or even to understand for ourselves, all that the Lord does or is. But it is our duty, as His subjects, our pleasure as His children, to bow before Him and adore!  
Oh, eternal God, I do not understand You! If I could comprehend You, You were not God, or I not man! The parts of Your ways which You have revealed stagger and almost slay me, but, as I fall at Your feet as dead, my heart cries, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.” For the Lord is good and righteous are all His ways. Hallelujah, though the world should perish! Hallelujah, though my soul should die with fear! The Lord shall forever be extolled. My Hearer, when you speak thus from your heart, you are a converted man! There is no mistake about it—you are reconciled to God, indeed, when you thus honor Him!  
Alas, many are only reconciled to the half of God, or to the 10th part of God! Indeed, I fear that many have shaped a god for themselves and are not reconciled to the true God at all! We want a conversion which shall make us run in parallel lines with the God who has revealed Himself by His Prophets and Apostles—and by His always-to-be-adored Son. So may it be with each one of us, for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 145.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—179, 245,116 (SONG I).

LETTER FROM MR. SPURGEON:  
DEAR FRIENDS—Nothing has happened to throw me back and I judge myself to be restored in bodily health and to be gradually recovering physical strength. The mind, also, is renewing its youth, and the spirits are returning to their proper height. For all this I am intensely grateful and I am most hopefully looking forward to return to labor under the Divine blessing. If I could also obtain a fresh anointing of the Holy Spirit, in answer to your prayers, it would be a far greater GIFT than even life itself! This age needs the Gospel in its purity and power. Oh for help to proclaim it that it might conquer all hearts! Jesus is dishonored by a teaching which evaporates the essential meaning from every doctrine and leaves nothing but the husks of rationalism. May the Lord glorify His own Son by vindicating the Gospel of His Grace in the consciences of men! So prays Yours in the eternal truth,  
*C. H. SPURGEON.*  
Mentone, March 8, 1885.

Adapted from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1468 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE PHILOSOPHY AND PROPRIETY OF ABUNDANT PRAISE  
NO. 1468

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, APRIL 13, 1879, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“They shall abundantly utter the memory of Your great goodness, and shall sing of Your righteousness.”  
Psalm 145:7.**

THIS is called “David’s Psalm of praise” and you will see that all through it he is inflamed by a strong desire that God may be greatly magnified. Hence he uses a variety of expressions and repeats himself in his holy vehemence. Run your eyes down the Psalm and notice such words as these—“I will extol You.” “I will bless Your name.” “Every day will I bless You.” “I will praise Your name forever and ever.” “Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised.” “One generation shall praise Your works to another.” “I will speak of the glorious honor of Your majesty.” “Men shall speak of the might of Your terrible acts” and other words of the same meaning down to the last verse—“My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord: and let all flesh bless His holy name forever and ever.”

David is not content with declaring that Jehovah is worthy of praise, or with pleading that His praise ought to be felt in the heart, but he will have it publicly spoken of, openly declared, plainly uttered and joyfully proclaimed in song. The inspired Psalmist, moved by the Holy Spirit, calls upon all flesh, yes, and upon all the works of God to sound forth the praises of the Most High! Will we not heartily respond to the call? In following out his design of praise, David had spoken in verse five of the majesty of God, the glorious King. His eyes seems to be dazzled by the glorious splendor of the august Throne and he cries, “I will speak of the glorious honor of Your majesty.” Then he thinks of the power of that Throne of majesty and of the force with which its just decrees are carried out and, so, in verse six he exclaims, “Men shall speak of the might of Your terrible acts and I will declare Your greatness.”

Here he speaks briefly both as to the majesty and the might of the dread Supreme, but when he turns his thoughts to the Divine goodness, he enlarges and uses words which indicate the stress which he lays upon his subject and his desire to linger over it. “They shall abundantly utter,” says our text, “the memory of Your great goodness.” Now, our desire, this morning, is that we, also, may praise and magnify the name of the Infinite Jehovah without limit and may especially have our hearts enlarged and our mouths opened wide to speak abundantly of His great goodness. O that in the whole of this congregation the text may become true—“They shall abundantly utter the memory of Your great goodness”—and having uttered it in plain speech, may we all rise a stage higher and, with gladsome music, sing of His righteousness!  
You see our objective, an objective in which, I trust, you all sympathize. Come, one and all, and praise the Lord! Is the invitation too wide? Observe the ninth verse—“The Lord is good to all: and His tender mercies are over all His works. All Your works shall praise You.” I will not limit the invitation of the Lord since you all drink of the river of His bounty! Render to Him, all of you, such praises as you can. But there is a special invitation to His saints. Come and bless His name with spiritual, inward, enlightened praise. “Bless the Lord, O house of Israel. You that fear the Lord, bless the Lord.” In your heart of hearts, extol, adore and make Him great, for it is written—“Your saints shall bless You.”

Verily this shall not be written in vain, for our souls shall bless the Lord this day as the Holy Spirit shall move within us! We shall speak upon two things that we may promote the objective we have in view. The first is, the method of securing the abundant utterance of God’s praise as to His goodness. And, secondly, the motives for desiring to secure this abundant utterance.

I. THE METHOD OF SECURING THE ABUNDANT UTTERANCE OF THE DIVINE PRAISE CONCERNING HIS GOODNESS. Our text gives us the mental philosophy of abounding praise and shows us the plan by which such praise may be secured. The steps are such as the best mental philosophy approves. First, we shall be helped to abundant praise by careful observation. Notice the text—“They shall abundantly utter the memory of Your great goodness.” Now, in order to memory, there must first of all be observation. A man does not remember what he never knew! This is clear to all and, therefore, the point is virtually implied in the text. In proportion as a fact or a truth makes an impression upon the mind, in that proportion is it likely to abide in the memory.

If you hear a sermon, that which you remember afterwards is the point which most forcibly strikes you while you are listening to the discourse. At the time you say, “I will jot that down, for I should not like to forget it, for it comes so closely home to me.” And whether you use your pencil or not, Memory obeys your wish and makes a record upon her tablets. It is so with the dealings of God towards us. If we want to remember His goodness, we must let it strike us—we must notice it, consider it, meditate upon it, estimate it and allow it to exert its due influence upon our hearts—then we shall not need to say that “we must try and remember,” for we shall remember as a matter of course. The impression being clearly and deeply made will not easily fade away, but we shall see it after many days.

The first thing, therefore, towards the plentiful praising of God is a careful observation of His goodness. Now, see what it is that we are to observe—God’s goodness. Too many are blind to that blessed object. They receive the bounties of His liberality and are in His care, but they attribute all that they receive to themselves or to secondary agents. God is not in all their thoughts and, consequently, His goodness is not considered. They have no memory of His goodness because they have no observation of it! Some, indeed, instead of observing the goodness of God, complain of His unkindness to them and imagine that He is needlessly severe.

Like the unprofitable servant in the parable, they say, “I knew You, that You are an austere man.” Others sit in judgment upon His ways, as we find them recorded in Holy Scripture, and dare to condemn the Judge of all the earth! Denying the goodness of Jehovah, they attempt to set up another god than the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who for this enlightened 19th Century is a god much too just. In this house, however, we worship Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—and none other than He. In many a place of worship this day they adore new gods, newly come up which our fathers knew not—not like the God of the Old Testament, who, in the opinion of modern philosophers, is as much out of date as Jupiter himself.

This day we say with David, “This God is our God forever and ever.” “O come let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before Jehovah our Maker. For He is our God and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hands.” As we find the Lord revealed both in the Old and the New Testament, making no division in the Revelation, but regarding it as one grand whole, we behold abundant goodness in Him! Mingled with that awful justice which we would not wish to deny, we see surpassing Grace and we delight that God is Love. He is gracious and full of compassion. He is slow to anger and of great mercy. We have no complaints to make against Him! We wish to make no alteration in His dealings or in His Character! He is our exceeding joy—our whole heart rejoices in the contemplation of Him. “Who is like unto You, O God? Among the gods who is like unto You?”

We are, then, to consider what many will not so much as believe—that there is great goodness in Jehovah, the God of Creation, Providence and Redemption—the God of Paradise, of Sinai and of Calvary. We are to thoroughly acquaint ourselves with Him as He has made Himself known and we are continually to consider His great goodness, that we may retain the memory of it. If we are willing to see, we shall not lack for opportunities of beholding His goodness every day, for it is to be seen in so many acts that I will not commence the catalog since I should never complete it! His goodness is seen in Creation—it shines in every sunbeam, glitters in every dewdrop, smiles in every flower and whispers in every breeze.

Earth and sea and air, teeming with innumerable forms of life, are all full of the goodness of the Lord! Sun, moon, and stars affirm that the Lord is good and all terrestrial things echo the proclamation. His goodness is also to be seen in the Providence which rules over all. Let rebellious spirits murmur as they may, goodness is enthroned in Jehovah’s kingdom and evil and suffering are intruders! God is good towards all His creatures and especially towards the objects of His eternal love for whom all things work together for good.

It is, however, in the domain of Divine Grace that the noblest form of Divine goodness is seen. Begin with the goodness which shines in our election and follow the silver thread through redemption, the mission of the Holy Spirit, the calling, the adoption, the preservation, the perfecting of the chosen—and you will see riches of goodness which will astound you! Dwell where you may within the kingdom of redemption and you will see rivers, yes, oceans of goodness! I leave your own minds to remember

these things and your own lips to abundantly utter the memory of the Lord’s great goodness in the wonders of His salvation! It is not my design to speak for you, but to stir you up to speak for yourselves!

The point which struck the Psalmist and should strike us all, is the greatness of the goodness. The greatness of the goodness will be seen by the contemplative mind upon a consideration of the person upon whom the goodness lights. “Why me?” will often be the utterance of a grateful spirit. That God should be good to any of His people shows His mercy, but that He should make me to be one of His and deal so well with me—here His goodness exceeds itself! Why me? Is this the manner of man, O Lord? What am I, and what is my father’s house? It is great goodness because it visits persons so insignificant, yes more—so guilty and so deserving of wrath! Blessed be God that He is good to persons so ungrateful—to persons who cannot, even, at the best, make any adequate return—who, alas, do not even make such return as they could! Ah, Lord, when I consider what a brutish creature I am, it is easy to confess the greatness of Your goodness!

The greatness of the goodness becomes apparent when we think of the greatness of God the Benefactor. “What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You visit him?” That God Himself should bless His people. That He should come in the form of human flesh to save His people. That He should dwell in us, walk in us and be to us a God—a very present help in trouble—is a miracle of love! Is not this great goodness? I can very well understand that the infinity of His benevolence should commit us to the charge of angels, but it is amazing that it should be written, “I the Lord do keep it: I will water it every moment lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day.”

Oh, the greatness of such personal condescension, such personal care! O heir of Heaven, from the fountain of all goodness shall you drink and not only from its streams! God Himself is your Portion and the lot of your inheritance! You are not put off with creatures—the Creator, Himself, is yours! Will you not remember this and so keep alive the memory of His goodness? The greatness of the goodness is, on some occasions, made manifest by the evil from which it rescues us. Nobody knows so well the blessing of health as he who has but lately been tortured in every limb— then for his restoration he blesses Jehovah Rophi, the healing Lord. None know what salvation from sin means like those who have been crushed beneath the burden of guilt and have been racked by remorse.

Did you ever feel yourself condemned of God and cast out from His Presence? Did the pangs of Hell commence within your startled conscience? Did your soul long for death rather than life, while thick clouds and darkness shrouded your guilty spirit? If so, when the Lord has put away your sin and said, “You shall not die.” When He has brought you forth from the prison, broken your bonds asunder and set your feet upon a rock, then has the new song been in your mouth, even praise forevermore! Then have you known it to be great goodness which thus delivered you. We may imagine what the bottom of the sea is like and conceive what it must be to be borne down to the lower deeps where the weeds are wrapped about the dead men’s brows, yet, I guarantee you that our imagination but poorly realizes what Jonah experienced when the floods compassed him about and he went down to the bottom of the mountains!

When the Lord brought his life up from corruption, then he had a strong and vivid memory of the great goodness of God, seeing he had been delivered from so great a death! It is in the storm that we learn! O praise the Lord for His goodness and for His wonderful works to the children of men! If I might have it so, I could wish my whole life to be calm as a fair summer’s evening when scarcely a zephyr stirs the happy flowers. I could desire that nothing might again disturb the serenity of my restful spirit— but were it to be so, I suspect I should know but little of the great goodness of the Lord. The sweet singer in the 107th Psalm ascribes the song of gratitude not to dwellers at home, but to wanderers in the wilderness—not to those who are always at liberty, but to emancipated captives—not to the strong and vigorous, but to those who barely escape from the gates of death. Not to those who stand upon a sea of glass, but to those who are tossed in tempests upon a raging ocean. Doubtless so it is—we should not perceive the greatness of goodness if we did not see the depth of the horrible pit from which it snatches us.

You were almost ruined in business, Friend, but you escaped with the skin of your teeth—then you praised God for His great goodness! Your dear child was given up by the physicians; your wife apparently sickened for death—but both these have been spared to you and herein you see the heights and depths of mercy! Now, therefore, lay up this great goodness in your memory to be the material for future Psalms of praise! Nor is this the only way of estimating God’s great goodness—you may estimate it by the actual greatness of the benefits bestowed. He gives like a king! No, He gives like a God! Behold, your God has not given you a few minted coins of gold, but he has endowed you with the mines, themselves! He has not, as it were, handed you a cup of cold water, but He has brought you to the flowing fountain and made the well, itself, your own. God Himself is ours! “The Lord is my Portion, says my soul.”

If you must have a little list of what He has given you, ponder the following items—He has given you a name and a place among His people. He has given you the rights and the nature of His children. He has given you the complete forgiveness of all your sins and you have it now. He has given you a robe of righteousness and you are wearing it now. He has given you a superlative loveliness in Christ Jesus and you have it now. He has given you access to Him and prevalence at the Mercy Seat. He has given you this world and world to come. He has given you all that He has! He has given you His own Son! And how shall He now refuse you anything? Oh, He has given like a God!

The greatness of His goodness this tongue can never hope to tell and so I ask you to think it over in a quiet hour at home. As for myself, I will speak of my Lord as I find Him, for the old proverb bids us do so. Whatever you shall say, Brothers and Sisters, I have nothing to speak but what is good of my God, my King from my childhood until now. He amazes me with His mercy! He utterly astounds me with His loving kindness! He causes my spirit to almost swoon away with delight beneath the sweetness of His love! Yet He has not spared me the rod, nor will He and,

blessed be His name for that, also! “Shall we receive good at the hands of the Lord and shall we not also receive evil?” asked the Patriarch.

But we will go beyond that and assert that evil is no evil when it comes from His hands! Everything is good which He ordains. We may not see it to be so at the time, but so it is. Our heavenly Father seems to rise from good to better and from better to yet better in infinite progression! He causes the roadway of our life to rise higher and higher and carries it over lofty mountains of loving kindness. Our life path winds always upward to yet higher summits of abounding mercy—therefore let His praise increase and the name of the Lord be still greater and greater!

I want to urge you, dear Friends, to observe the goodness of God carefully for your souls’ good. There is a great difference between eyes and no eyes—yet many have eyes and see not. God’s goodness flows before them and they say, “Where is it?” They breathe it and they say, “Where is it?” They sit at the table and they are fed upon it! They wear it upon their limbs! It is in the very beating of their heart and yet they say, “Where is it?” Be not blind! “The ox knows his owner and the ass his master’s crib”—let us not be more crude than beasts of the field—but let us know the Lord and consider well the greatness of His goodness!

I have said that the text contains the philosophy of great praise and we see this in the second stage of the process, namely, diligent memory. That which has made an impression upon the mind by observation is fastened upon the memory. Memory seems to be in two things—first in retaining an impression and then in recollecting it at a future time. I suppose that, more or less, everything that happens to us is retained in the mind, but it is not easy to reproduce the fainter impressions when you wish to do so. I know in my own mind a great many things that I am sure I remember, but yet I cannot always recollect them immediately. Give me a quarter of an hour to run through a certain arrangement of ideas and I shall say, “Oh yes, I have it. It was in my mind, but I could not recall it at the time.” Memory collects facts and afterwards recollects them. The matters before us are recorded by memory, but the tablet may be mislaid—the perfection of memory is to preserve the tablet in a well-known place from which you can fetch it forth in a moment.

I have dwelt rather long upon observation with the view that you may begin aright from the beginning and, by getting vivid impressions, may be the better able to retain and recall them. We cannot utter what we have forgotten and, therefore, the use of close observation to make a strong memory touching the Lord’s great goodness. How are we to strengthen our memory as to God’s goodness? First, we should be well acquainted with the documents in which His goodness is recorded. A man may be said to keep in memory a fact which did not happen in his own time, but hundreds of years before he was born—he remembers it because he has seen the document in which the fact is recorded.

In a certain sense this is within the range of memory—it is within the memory of man, the united memory of the race. Beloved, be familiar with the Word of God! Store your memory with the ancient records of His great goodness! Drink in the whole narrative of the Evangelists and despise not Moses and the Prophets. Soak in the Psalms and the Song of Solomon and such Books till you come to know the well-recorded goodness of the Lord! Have His Words and deeds of goodness arranged and at your fingertips because they are in your heart and then you will be abundantly sure to utter the memory of His goodness, for “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”

Next, if you would strengthen your memory, diligently observe the memorials. There are two in the Christian Church. There is the memorial of your Savior’s death, burial and resurrection which is set forth in Believers’ Baptism, wherein we are buried and risen with the Lord Christ. Forget not that memorial of His deep anguish when He was immersed in grief and plunged in agony, for He bids you observe it. And as for the Holy Supper, never neglect it, but be often at the table where, again, you set forth His death till He comes. He has bid you do this in remembrance of Him— devoutly cherish the precious memorial!

Great events in nations have been preserved upon the memory of future generations by some ordained ceremonial and the Lord’s Supper is of that kind. Therefore observe well the Table of the Lord that you forget not His great goodness. Look how the Jews kept their Exodus in mind by means of the Paschal Lamb—how they ate it after the sprinkling of the blood— how they talked to their children and told them of the deliverance from Egypt, abundantly uttering the memory of God’s goodness and then after supper they sang a hymn, even as our text bids us sing of the righteousness of God. Strengthen your memories, then, by reverent attention to the historical documents and the memorial ordinances.

Still, the most important is the memory of what has happened to yourself, your own personal experience. I will not give a penny for your religion unless it has taken effect upon yourself. The power of prayer! What of that? Did you ever receive an answer to prayer? Did you ever wrestle with the angel and come away victorious? What do you know about prayer if you never prayed? You are very orthodox? Yes, but unless the Doctrines of Grace have brought to your soul the Grace of the doctrines—and you have tasted and handled them—what do you know about them? Nothing certainly to remember! O, dear Heart, were you ever born again? Then you will remember His great goodness! Were you ever cleansed from your sin and justified in Christ? You will remember His great goodness! Have you been renewed in heart so as to hate sin and live in holiness? If so, you will remember because you know something which flesh and blood have not revealed unto you. Let every personal mercy be written upon your personal memory!

I have heard that the science of mnemonics, or the strengthening of the memory, for which I have not a very high esteem, lies in the following of certain methods. According to some, you link one idea with another—you remember a date by associating it with something that you can see. Practice this method in the present case. Remember God’s goodness by the objects around you which are associated with it. For instance, let your bed remind you of God’s mercy in the night watches and your table of His goodness in supplying your daily needs. My garments, when I put them on this morning, reminded me of times when my hands were unable to perform even that simple task. All around us there are memoranda of

God’s love if we choose to read them.

The memory of some deed of Divine goodness may be connected with every piece of furniture in your room. There is the old armchair where you wrestled with God in great trouble and received a gracious answer. You cannot forget it—you do not pray so well anywhere else as you do there— you have become attached to that particular chair. That thumbed Bible, that particular one I mean—it is getting rather worn, now, and is marked a good deal, but, nevertheless, out of that very copy the promises have gleamed forth like the stars in Heaven and, therefore, it helps your memory to use it. I remember a poor man giving me what I thought great praise. I visited him in the hospital and he said, “Ah, you seem to have hung this room round with your texts, for everything reminds me of what I have heard you say, and as I lay here I recollect your stories and your sayings.” In much the same way we should remember what God has done for us by looking at all the various places, circumstances, times and persons which were the surroundings of His mercy. O for a clear remembrance of the goodness of God!

Memory is sometimes helped by classification. You send a servant to a shop for a variety of articles—she will forget some of them unless you so arrange the order that one suggests another. Take care, then, to set God’s mercies in order before you and reckon them up in number, if you can, and so fix them in your memory. At other times, when persons have very bad memories, they like to write down on a piece of paper that which is important to remember. I have often done so and have placed the paper where I have never found it again. A thread around the finger, or a knot in a handkerchief and many other devices has been tried. I do not care what it is, so long as you try and remember God’s mercy to you by some means or other. Do make some record of His goodness.

You know the day in which you lost that money, do you not? “Yes, very well.” You remember the day of the month of Black Friday, or Black Monday, up in the City. You have evil days indelibly noted in the black pocketbook of memory—do you remember, as well, the days of God’s special loving kindness to you? You should! Take pains to make notes of notable benefits and to mark remarkable blessings and so you shall, in future days, utter the memory of God’s great goodness! The first two processes for securing abundant praise are observation and remembrance.

The next is utterance “They shall abundantly utter.” The word contains the idea of boiling or bubbling up like a fountain. It signifies a holy fluency about the mercy of God. We have quite enough fluent people about, but they are, many of them, idlers for whom Satan finds abundant work to do. May the Lord deliver us from the noise of fluent women—but it matters not how fluent men and women are if they will be fluent on the topic now before us. Open your mouths! Let the praises pour forth! Let rivers of it come! Stream away! Gush away all that you possibly can! “They shall abundantly utter the memory of Your great goodness.” Do not stop the joyful speakers—let them go on forever. They do not exaggerate—they cannot!

You say they are enthusiastic, but they are not half up to the pitch yet! Bid them become more excited and speak yet more fervently. Go on, Brother, go on! Pile it up! Say something greater, grander and more still fiery! You cannot exceed the Truth of God! You have come to a theme where your most fluent powers will fail in utterance. The text calls for a sacred fluency and I would exhort you to exercise it liberally when you are speaking of the goodness of God. “They shall abundantly utter it”—that is, they shall constantly be doing it—they shall talk about God’s goodness all day long! When you step into their cottages they will begin to tell you of God’s goodness to them! When you bid adieu to them at night you shall hear more last words upon their favorite theme!

Very likely they will repeat themselves, but that does not matter, you cannot have too much of this truly good thing. Just as the singers in the temple repeated again and again the chorus, “His mercy endures forever,” so may we repeat our praises! Some of God’s mercies are so great and sweet that if we never had another thought throughout eternity, the recollection of the single favor might forever remain! The splendor of Divine Love is so great that a single manifestation of it is often all that we can bear! To have two such revelations at once would be as overpowering as though God should make two suns when one already fills the world with light! Oh, praise the Lord, my Brothers and Sisters, with boundless exultation! Awaken all your faculties to this Divine service and abundantly utter the memory of His goodness!

You cannot praise abundantly unless your memory supplies materials and, on the other hand, your memory will lose strength unless you utter what you know. When you went to school and had a lesson to learn, you found out that by reading your lesson aloud you learned it more quickly, for your ears assisted your eyes. Uttering the Divine goodness is a great help to the memory of it! By teaching we learn—by giving the Truth of God expression, we deepen its impression upon our minds.

Now I come to the last part of this admirable process. When we have abundantly uttered, then we are to sing. In the old Greek mythology, Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory, is the mother of the Muses and surely where there is a good memory of God’s loving kindness the heart will soon produce a song! But what is surprising in the text is that when the joy is described as mounting from plain utterance to song it takes another theme—“Sing of Your righteousness.” When the heart is most adoring and selects the grandest theme for reverent song, it chooses the meeting of goodness and righteousness as its topic. How sweet is that canticle—“Mercy and Truth are met together, and Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other.” The Atonement is the gem of the heart’s poetry. Do not your hearts burn within you at the very mention of the glorious deed of Jesus, our great Substitute?

Parnassus is outdone by Calvary! The Castalian spring is dried and Jesus’ wounded side has opened another fountain of song! The goodness of the Lord to us in all the blessings of His Providences we gladly chant, but when we tell of the Grace which led our Lord Jesus to bleed and die, “the Just for the unjust to bring us to God,” our music leaps to nobler heights! Incomparable Wisdom ordained a way in which God should be righteous to the sternness of severity and yet should be good, illimitable good, to

those that put their trust in Him! Lift up, then, your music till the golden harps shall find themselves outdone! Thus, we have explained the method of securing an abundant utterance—may the Holy Spirit help us carry it out.

II. In the second place, we shall very briefly note THE MOTIVES FOR THIS ABUNDANT UTTERANCE. These are right at our fingertips. The first is because we cannot help it. The goodness of God demands that we should speak of it. If the Lord Jesus, Himself, should charge His people to be silent as to His goodness, they would scarcely be able to obey the command. They would, like the man that was healed, blaze abroad the mighty work that He had done. But, bless His name, He has not told us to be quiet—He allows us to abundantly utter the memory of His great goodness! The stones of the street would cry out as we went along if we did not speak of His love!

Some of you good people seldom speak of the goodness of God! Why is this? I wonder how you can be so coldly quiet. “Oh,” said one in his first love, “I must speak or I shall burst” and we have sometimes felt the same when the restrained testimony was as fire within our bones! Is it not a sacred instinct to tell what we feel within? The news is too good to keep! Indulge to the fullest the holy propensity of your renewed nature! Your soul says, “Speak,” and if etiquette says, “Hush, they will think you a fanatic,” regard it not, but speak aloud and let them think you are a fanatic if they please! Sir, play the organ very softly when the subject is your own praise, but when you come to the praises of God, pull out all the stops—thunders of music are all too little for His infinite goodness!

Another motive for abundantly uttering the praises of God is that other voices are clamorous to drown it. What a noisy world this is with its conflicting and discordant cries. “Lo here,” cries one. “Lo there,” shouts another. This uproar would drown the notes of God’s praise unless His people uttered it again and again! The more there is said against our God, the more should we speak for Him. Whenever you hear a man curse, it would be wise to say aloud, “Bless the Lord.” Say it seven times for every time he curses and make him hear it. Perhaps he will want to know what you are doing and you will then have an opportunity of asking what he is doing— and he will have more difficulty in explaining himself than you will in explaining yourself.

Try, if you can, to make up for the injuries done to the dear and sacred name of God by multiplying your praises in proportion as you hear Him spoken ill of. I say unless you give forth abundant utterance, God’s praise will be buried under heaps of error, blasphemy, ribaldry, nonsense and idle talk! Abundantly utter it so that some of it, at least, may be heard! Praise the Lord abundantly because it will benefit you to do so. How bright the past looks when we begin to praise God for it. We say, “I am the man that has seen affliction,” and we are to fill the cup of memory with gall and wormwood—but when we see the goodness of God in it all, we turn the kerchief with which we wiped our tears into a flag of victory—and with holy praise, in the name of our God, we wave the banner!

As for the present, if you think of God’s mercies, how different it seems. A man comes to his dinner table and does not enjoy what is there because he misses an expected dainty. But if he were as poor as some people, he would not turn his nose up, but would bless the goodness which has given him so much more than he deserves! Some I know, even among Christians, are growlers in general and always finding fault. The best things in the world are not good enough for them. Ah, my Brother, abundantly utter the memory of God’s goodness and you will find nothing to grumble about—nothing to complain about—but everything to rejoice in! As for the future, if we remember God’s goodness, how joyfully we shall march into it. There is the same goodness for tomorrow as for yesterday and the same goodness for old age as for youth—the same God to bless me when I grow gray as when I was a babe upon my mother’s breast. Therefore, forward to the future without hesitation or suspicion, abundantly uttering the loving kindness of the Lord.

Again, I think we ought to do this because of the good it does to other people. If you abundantly talk of God’s goodness you are sure to benefit your neighbors. Many are comforted when they hear of God’s goodness to their friends. Draw a long face and lament the trials of the way—sit down with somber brethren and enjoy a little comfortable misery and see whether crowds will ask to share your vinegar.—

*“While here our various needs we mourn,*

*United groans ascend on high,”*  
says Dr. Watts, and I am afraid he speaks the truth, but very few will be led in this way to resolve—“We will go with these people, for we perceive that God is with them.” Is it good reasoning if men say, “These people are so miserable that they must be on the way to Heaven”? We may hope they are, for they evidently need some better place to live, but then it may be questioned if such folks would not be wretched even in Heaven!

You smile, dear Friends, as if you said you would not be much attracted by sanctimonious misery, nor do I think you would. Therefore do not try it yourselves, but, on the contrary, talk much of the goodness of the Lord! Wear a smiling face! Let your eyes sparkle and go through the world as if you are not slaves under the lash, or prisoners in bonds, but the Lord’s free men! We have glorious reasons for being happy—let us be so and soon we shall hear persons asking, “What is this? Is this religion? I always thought religious people felt bound to be down in the dumps and to go mourning and sighing all their days.” When they see your joy they will be tempted to come to Christ! There is a blessed seductiveness in a holy, happy life. Praise, then, His name! Praise His name forevermore! Abundantly utter the memory of His great goodness and you will bring many to Christ!

Such happy utterance will help, also, to comfort your own Christian friends and fellow sufferers. There is a deal of misery in the world—just now more than usual. Many are sorrowing from various causes. Therefore, my dear Friends, be happier than you ever were. That venerable man of God, now in Heaven, our dear old father Dransfield, when it was a very foggy morning in November, used to always come into the vestry before the sermon and say, “It is a dreary morning, dear Pastor. We must rejoice in the Lord more than usual. Things around us are dark, but within and

above all is bright. I hope we shall have a very happy service today.” He would shake hands with me and smile till he seemed to carry us all into the middle of summer. What if it is bad weather? Bless the Lord that it is not worse than it is! We are not altogether in Egyptian darkness—the sun does shine now and then—and we are sure it is not blown out.

So, when we are sick and ill, let us thank God that we shall not be ill forever, for there is a place where the inhabitants are no more sick. And now, today, if your harps have been hanging on the willows, take them down! If you have not praised the Lord as you should, begin to do so! Wash your months and get rid of the sour flavor of murmuring about bad trade and bad weather! Sweeten your lips with the pleasant confection of praise. I will tell you this, Brothers and Sisters, if any of you shall confess to me that you have sinned by going too far in blessing God, I will, for once, become a priest and give you absolution! I never tried my hand at that business, before, but I think I can manage as much. Praise God extravagantly if you can. Try it! I wish you would say within yourself, “I will go beyond all boundaries in this matter,” for there are no boundaries to the deserving of an ever-blessed God!

Lastly, let us praise and bless God because it is the way in which He is glorified. We cannot add to His Glory, for it is infinite in itself—but we can make it to be more widely known by simply stating the truth about Him. Don’t you want to give honor to God? Would you not lay down your life that the whole earth might be filled with His Glory? Well, if you cannot cover the earth with His praises as the waters cover the sea, you can at least contribute your portion to the flood! Oh, keep not back your praises, but bless and magnify His name from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same!

It will lift earth upward and heavenward if we can all unite in praise— we shall see it rising as it were beneath our feet—and ourselves rising with it until we shall stand as upon the top of some lofty Alp that has pierced the vault of Heaven! And we shall be among the angels, feeling as they feel, doing as they do and losing ourselves as they lose themselves in the eternal hallelujah of, “Glory, and honor, and majesty, and power, and dominion, and might be unto Him that sits upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever.”

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THE LORD—THE LIBERATOR  
NO. 484

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 14, 1862, BY REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“The Lord looses the prisoners.”  
Psalm 146:7.**

WHEN preaching last Tuesday in Dover, the mayor of the town very courteously lent the ancient town hall for the service, and in passing along to reach a private entrance, I noticed a large number of grated windows upon a lower level than the great hall. These belonged to the prison cells where persons committed for offenses within the jurisdiction of the borough were confined. It at once struck me as a singular combination, that we should be preaching the Gospel of liberty in the upper chamber, while there were prisoners of the Law beneath us.

Perhaps when we sang praises to God, the prisoners, like those who were in the same jail with Paul and Silas, heard us. But the free word above did not give them liberty, nor did the voice of song loose their bonds. Alas, what a picture is this of many in our congregations! We preach liberty to the captives. We proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. But how many remain, year after year, in the bondage of Satan, slaves to sin? We send up our notes of praise right joyously to our Father who is in Heaven, but our praises cannot give them joy, for alas, their hearts are unused to gratitude. Some of them are mourning on account of unpardoned sin, and others of them are deploring their blighted hopes, for they have looked for comfort where it is never to be found.

Let us breathe a prayer at the commencement of the sermon this morning, “Lord, break the fetters and set free the captives. Glorify Yourself this morning by proving Yourself to be Jehovah, who looses the prisoners.” The little circumstance which I have mentioned fixed itself in my mind, and in my private meditations it thrust itself upon me. My thoughts ran somewhat in an allegory, until I gave imagination its full rein and bid her bear me at her will. In my daydream I thought that some angelic warden was leading me along the corridors of this great world-prison and bidding me look into the various cells where the prisoners were confined, reminding me, time after time, as I looked sorrowful, that “Jehovah looses the prisoners.”

What I thought of, I will now tell you. The dress of the sermon may be metaphorical. But my only aim is to utter comforting, substantial Truths of God, and may the Master grant that some of you who have been in these prisons, as I have been, may this day come out of them and rejoice that the Lord has loosed you.

I. The first cell to which I went, and to which I shall conduct you, is called the common prison. In this common prison, innumerable souls are shut up. It were useless to attempt to count them. They are legion. Their number is ten thousand times ten thousand. This is the ward of SIN. All the human race have been prisoners here. And those who this day are perfectly at liberty once wore the heavy chains, and were confined within the black walls of this enormous prison. I stepped into it, and to my surprise, instead of hearing, as I had expected, notes of mourning and lament, I heard loud and repeated bursts of laughter.

The mirth was boisterous and stubbornly defiant. The profane were cursing and blaspheming. Others were shouting as though they had found great spoil. I looked into the faces of some of the criminals and saw sparkling gaiety—their aspect was rather that of wedding guests, than prisoners. Walking to and fro, I noticed captives who boasted that they were free! And when I spoke to them of their prison and urged them to escape, they resented my advice, saying, “We were born free, and were never in bondage to any man.” They bade me prove my words. And when I pointed to the irons on their wrists, they laughed at me, and said that these were ornaments which gave forth music as they moved. It was only my dull and somber mind, they said, which made me talk of clanking fetters and jingling chains.

There were men fettered hard and fast to foul and evil vices, and these called themselves free livers, while others whose very thoughts were bound, for the iron had entered into their soul, with braggart looks cried out to me that they were free thinkers. Truly, I had never seen such bond slaves in my life, nor any so fast manacled as these. But always did I mark, as I walked this prison through and through, that the most fettered thought themselves the most free! And those who were in the dark part of the dungeon, thought they had the most light. And those whom I considered to be the most wretched and the most to be pitied, were the very ones who laughed the most, and raved most madly and boisterously in their mirth!

I looked with sorrow, but as I looked, I saw a bright spirit touch a prisoner on the shoulder, who thereon withdrew with the Shining One. He went out and I knew, for I had read the text—“The Lord looses the prisoners”—I knew that the prisoner had been loosed from the house of bondage. But I noted that as he went forth, his late bond fellows laughed and pointed with their fingers, and called him sniveler, hypocrite, mean pretender, and all sorts of ill names, until the prison walls rang, and rang again with their mirthful contempt! I watched and saw the mysterious visitor touch another, and then another, and another, and they disappeared.

The common conversation of the prison said that they had gone mad. That they were become slaves, or miserable fanatics, whereas I knew that they were gone to be free forever—emancipated from every bond. What struck me most was that the prisoners who were touched with the finger of delivering love were frequently the worst of the whole crew. I marked one who had blasphemed, but the Divine hand touched him, and he went weeping out of the gate. I saw another who had often scoffed the loudest when he had seen others led away, but he went out as quietly as a lamb. I observed some, whom I thought to be the least depraved of them all, but they were left, and oftentimes the blackest sinners of the whole company were first taken. And I remembered that I had somewhere in an old Book read these words—“The publicans and the harlots enter into the kingdom of God before you.”

As I gazed intently, I saw some of those men who had once been prisoners come back again into the prison—not in the same dress which they had worn before—but arrayed in white robes, looking like new creatures. They began to talk with their fellow prisoners, and, oh, how sweetly did they speak! They told them there was liberty to be had, that yonder door would open, and that they might escape. They pleaded with their fellow men, even unto tears. I saw them sit down and talk with them till they wept upon their necks, urging them to escape, pleading as though it were their own life that was at stake.

At first I hoped within myself that all the company of prisoners would rise and cry, “Let us be free.” But no. The more these men pleaded, the harder the others seemed to grow. And, indeed, I found it the same when I sought myself to be an ambassador to these slaves of sin. Wherever the finger of the Shining One was felt, our pleadings easily prevailed. But except in those who were thus touched by the heavenly messenger, all our exhortations fell upon deaf ears, and we left that den of iniquity crying, “Who has believed our report, and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?”

Then I was cast into a state of meditation, as I considered what a marvel of mercy it was that I myself should be free. For well do I remember when I spurned every invitation of love. When I hugged my chains, dreamed my prison garb to be a royal robe, and took the meals of the prison. I grasped the pleasures of sin, and relished them as sweet, yes, dainty morsels, fit for princes! How it came to pass that Sovereign Grace should have set me free, I cannot tell. I know only this—I will sing forever, while I live, and when I die, that, “The Lord looses the prisoners.” Our gracious God knows how to bring us up from among the captives of sin, set our feet in the way of righteousness and liberty, make us His people and keep us so forever. Alas, how many have I now before me who are prisoners in this common prison?—

*“Oh, Sovereign Grace, their hearts subdue; May they be freed from bondage, too.  
As willing followers of the Lord,  
Brought forth to freedom by His Word.”*

II. I asked the warden where those were led who were released from the common ward. He told me that they were taken away to be free, perfectly free. But that before their complete jail deliverance it was necessary that they should visit a house of detention which he would show me. He led me there. It was called the solitary cell. I had heard much of the solitary system and I wished to look inside this cell, supposing that it would be a dreadful place. Over the door was written this word—“PENITENCE,” and when I opened it, I found it so clean, and white, and so sweet, and full of light, that I said this place was fitter to be a House of Prayer than a prison.

And my guide told me that indeed, so it was originally intended, and that nothing but that iron door of unbelief which the prisoners would persist in shutting fast, made it a prison at all. When once that door was open the place became so dear an oratory, that those who were once prisoners in it were likely to come back to the cell of their own accord, and begged leave to use it, not as a prison, but as a closet for prayer all their lives long. He even told me that one was heard to say when he was dying, that his only regret in dying was that in Heaven there would be no cell of penitence.

Here David wrote seven of his sweetest Psalms. Peter also wept bitterly here. And the woman who was a sinner, here washed the feet of her Lord. But this time I was regarding it as a prison, and I perceived that the person in the cell did so consider it. I found that every prisoner in this cell must be there alone. He had been accustomed to mix with the crowd, and find his comfort in the belief that he was a Christian because born in a Christian nation. But he learned that he must be saved alone, if saved at all. He had been accustomed previously to go up to the House of God in company and thought that going there was enough.

But now every sermon seemed to be aimed at him, and every threat smote his conscience. I remembered to have read a passage in the same old Book I quoted just now—“I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. And the land shall mourn, every family apart. The family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart. The family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart. The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart. The family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart. All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart.”

I noticed that the penitent, while thus alone, and apart in his cell, sighed and groaned a lot, and now and then mingled with his penitential utterances, some words of unbelief. Alas, were it not for these, that heavy door would long ago have been taken from its hinges. ‘Twas unbelief that shut the prisoners in, and if unbelief had been removed from this cell, I say it had been an oratory for Heaven, and not a place for disconsolate mourning and lamentation. As the prisoner wept for the past, he prophesied for the future, and groaned that he should never come out of this confinement, because sin had ruined him utterly and destroyed his soul eternally.

How foolish his fears were, all men might see, for as I looked round upon this clean and white cell, I saw that the door had a knocker inside, and that if the man had but the courage to lift it, there was a Shining One standing ready outside who would open the door at once! Yes, more, I perceived that there was a secret spring called faith and if the man could but touch it, though it were but with a trembling finger, it would make the door fly open. Then I noticed that this door had on the lintel and on the two side posts the marks of blood, and any man who looked on that blood, or lifted that knocker, or touched that spring, found the door of unbelief fly open and he came out from the cell of his solitary penitence to rejoice in the Lord who had put away his sin and cleansed him forever from all iniquity.

So I spoke to this penitent and bade him trust in the blood and it may be that through my words the Lord afterwards loosed the prisoner. But this I learned, that no words of mine alone could do it, for in this case, even where repentance was mingled with but a little unbelief, it is the Lord, the Lord alone, who can loose the prisoners.

III. I passed away from that cell, though I would have been content to linger there, and I stopped at another. This, also, had an iron gate of unbelief, as heavy and as ponderous as the former. I heard the warden coming and when he opened the door for me, it grated horribly upon its hinges and disturbed the silence, for this time I was come into the silent cell. The wretch confined here was one who said he could not pray. If he could pray he would be free. He was groaning, crying, sighing, weeping because he could not pray. All he could tell me, as his eyeballs rolled in agony, was this—“I would, but cannot, pray. I would plead with God, but I cannot find a word. My guilt has smitten me dumb.”

Back he went, and refused to speak again, but he kept up a melancholy roaring all the day long. In this place no sound was heard but that of wailing. All was hushed except the dropping of his tears upon the cold stone, and his dreary sighs and groans. Verily, thought I, this is a sad and singular case, yet I remember when I was in that cell myself, I did not think it strange. I thought that the heavens were brass above me, and that if I cried ever so earnestly the Lord would shut out my prayer. I dared not pray, I was too guilty. And when I did dare to pray, it was hardly prayer, for I had no hope of being heard.

“No,” I said, “it is presumption. I must not plead with Him.” And when at times I would have prayed, I could not. Something choked all utterance, and my spirit could only lament, and long, and pant, and sigh to be able to pray. I know that some of you have been in this prison, and while I am talking to you this morning, you will remember it and bless God for deliverance. Perhaps some of you are in it now, and though I say I think your case is very strange, it will not seem so to you. But do you know there was a little table in this cell, and on the table lay a key of promise, inscribed with choice words. I am sure the key would unlock the prison door, and if the prisoner had possessed skill to use it, he might have made his escape at once.

This was the key, and these were the words thereon—“The Lord looked down from the height of His sanctuary: from Heaven did the Lord behold the earth, to hear the groaning of the prisoner. To loose those that are appointed to death.” Now, thought I, if this man cannot speak, yet God hears his groans. If he cannot plead, God listens to his sighs, and beholds him all the way from Heaven, with this purpose, that He may catch even the faintest whisper of this poor man’s broken heart and set him free. For though the soul feels it can neither plead nor pray, yet it has prayed, and it shall prevail. I tried to catch the ear of my poor friend a little while, and I talked to him, though he would not speak with me.

I reminded him that the Book in his cell contained instances of dumb men whom Jesus had taught to speak. And I told him that Christ was able to make him speak plainly, too. I turned to the Book of Jonah and read him these words—“Out of the belly of Hell cried I and You heard me.” I quoted the words of Elijah, “Go again seven times.” I told him that the Lord needed no fine language, for misery is the best argument for mercy, and our wounds the best mouths to speak to God’s ear. Besides, I told him, we have an Advocate with the Father who opens His mouth for the dumb, so that those who cannot speak for themselves have One to speak for them.

I told the man that whether he could pray or not, he was bid to look at the blood marks over his door. I told him that the publican was justified by the blood, though he could only cry, “God, be merciful to me, a sinner.” I pleaded with him to receive the Lord’s own testimony, that the Lord Jesus is, “able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by

Him,” that He waited to be gracious and was a God ready to pardon. But after all, I felt that the Lord, alone, must loose His prisoners. O, gracious God, loose them now!

IV. We had not time to stay long at any one place, so we hastened to a fourth door. The door opened and shut behind me, and I stood alone. What did I see? I saw nothing! It was dark, dark as Egypt in her plague! This was the black hole called the cell of ignorance. I groped as a blind man gropes for the wall. I was guided by my ear by sobs and moans to a spot where knelt a creature in an earnest agony of prayer. I asked him what made his cell so dark. I knew the door was made of unbelief, which surely shuts out all light, but I marveled why this place should be darker than the rest. Then I recollected to have read of some that sat, “in darkness, and in the shadow of death, being bound in affliction and iron.”

I asked him if there were no windows to the cell. Yes, there were windows, many windows, so people told him, but they had been stopped up years ago, and he did not know the way to open them. He was fully convinced that they never could afford light to him. I felt for one of the ancient light holes but it seemed as if, instead of giving light, it emitted darkness. I touched it with my hand, and it felt to me to have once been a window such as I had gazed through with delight. He told me it was one of the Doctrines of Grace which had greatly perplexed him. It was called Election.

He said he should have had a little light had it not been for that doctrine, but since God had chosen His people, and he felt persuaded that He had not chosen him, he was lost forever, since if he were not chosen, it was hopeless for him to seek for mercy. I went up to that window and pulled out some handfuls of rags—filthy rotten rags which some enemies of the doctrine had stuffed into the opening—caricatures and misrepresentations of the doctrine maliciously used to injure the glorious truth of Divine Sovereignty.

As I pulled out these rags, light streamed in, and the man smiled as I told him, “It is a mercy for you that there is such a doctrine as election! For if there were no such doctrine, there would be no hope for you. Salvation must either be by God’s will or by man’s merit. If it were by man’s merit, you would never be saved. But since it is by God’s will, and He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, there is no reason why He should not have mercy on you—even though you may be the chief of sinners. Meanwhile He bids you believe in His Son, Jesus, and gives you His Divine Word for it, that, “Him that comes unto Him, He will in no wise cast out.”

The little light thus shed upon the poor man led him to seek for more, so he pointed to another darkened window which was called—The Fall—or Human Depravity. The man said, “Oh, there is no hope for me, for I am totally depraved, and my nature is exceedingly vile. There is no hope for me.” I pulled the rags out of this window, too, and I said to him, “Do you not see that your ruin fits you for the remedy? It is because you are lost that Christ came to save you. Physicians are for the sick, robes for the naked, cleansing for the filthy, and forgiveness for the guilty.”

He said but little, but he pointed to another window, which was one I had long looked through and seen my Master’s glory by its means. It was the doctrine of Particular Redemption. “Ah,” said he, “suppose Christ has not redeemed me with His precious blood! Suppose He has never bought me with His death!” I knocked out some old bricks which had been put in by an unskillful hand, which yet blocked out the light, and I told him that Christ did not offer a mock redemption, but one which did really redeem, for “the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleans us from all sin.” “Ah,” he said, “but suppose I am not one of the ‘us’?” I told him that he that believes and trusts Christ is manifestly one of those whom Jesus came to save, for he is saved.

I told him that inasmuch as universal redemption manifestly does not redeem all, it was unworthy of his confidence. But a ransom which did redeem all Believers, who are the only persons for whom it was presented, was a sure ground to build upon. There were other doctrines like these. I found the man did not understand one of them. The Truths of God had been misrepresented to him, and he had heard the Doctrines of Grace falsely stated and caricatured, or else had never heard them at all. He had been led by some blind guide who had led him into the ditch, and now when the windows were opened, and the man could see, he saw written over the door, “Believe and live!” And in the new light which he had found, he trusted his Lord and Savior and walked out free, marveling that he had been so long a slave.

I marveled, not but I thought in my heart how accursed are those teachers who hide the light from the eyes of men so that they understand not the way of life. Ignorant souls, who know not the plan of salvation, will have many sorrows, which they might escape by instruction. Study your Bibles well. Be diligent in attending upon a Free Grace ministry—labor after a clear apprehension of the plan of salvation and it will often please God that when you come to understand His Truth your spirits will receive comfort, for it is by the Truth that, “the Lord looses the prisoners.”

V. I passed on and came to another chamber. This room, marked number five, was large, and had many persons in it who were trying to walk to and fro, but every man had a chain round his ankle and a huge cannon ball fixed to it—a military punishment, they said, for deserters from the ranks of virtue. This clog of habit troubled the prisoner much. I saw some of them trying to file their chains with rusty nails, and others were endeavoring to fret away the iron by dropping tears of penitence on it.

But these poor men made but little progress at their work. The warden told me that this was the chain of habit and that the ball which dragged behind was the old propensity to lust and sin. I asked him why they did not get the chains knocked off, and he said they had been trying a long time to be rid of them, but they never could do it in the way they went to work, since the proper way to get rid of the chain of habit was, first of all, to get out of prison. The door of unbelief must be opened, and they must trust in the one great Deliverer, the Lord Jesus, whose pierced hands could open all prison doors. After that, upon the anvil of Divine Grace, with the hammer of love, their fetters could be broken off.

I stayed awhile, and I saw a drunkard led out of his prison, rejoicing in pardoning Grace. He had previously labored to escape from his drunkenness but some three or four times he broke his pledge, and went back to his old sin. I saw that man trust in the precious blood, and he became a Christian, and becoming a Christian, he could no more love his cups. At one stroke of the hammer, the ball was gone forever. Another was a

swearer. He knew it was wrong to blaspheme the Most High, but he did it still, till he gave his heart to Christ—and then he never blasphemed again—for that foul thing was abhorred.

I noticed some and methinks I am one of them myself, although they had the ball taken away—yet on their hands there were the remains of old chains. Like Paul, in another case, when we rejoice in all things, we have to say, “Except these bonds.” Once we were chained with both hands together. The Divine hammer has smitten off the connecting links, but still some one or two are left hanging there. Ah, often has that link made me cry out—“O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Though I am free, yet still the iron clings to its hold, and will hang there till I die. “When I would do good, evil is present with me.”

O that old Adam nature, the corrupt flesh! Would God we were rid of it! Blessed be the Lord, as the pulse begins to beat high with Heaven’s glory, the band will burst, and we shall be perfect forever! There is no way of getting rid of the links of old habits but by leaving the prison of unbelief, and coming to Christ. Then the evil habits are renounced as a necessary consequence, though the temptation will remain. Though sometimes we have to feel a link of the chain, it is a subject of unbounded thankfulness that the link is not fastened to the staple. We may sometimes feel it dragging behind, enough to trip us up, so that we cannot run in the path of obedience as swiftly as we would, but it is not in the staple now.

The bird can fly—though there is a remnant of its cord about its foot—it mounts up to Heaven, singing its song of praise. The Lord must loose prisoners from their evil habits. He can do it! A drop of Jesus’ blood can eat the iron away and the file of His agonies can cut through the chain of long acquired sins and make us free. “The Lord looses the prisoners.”

VI. I must take you to another cell. In almost all prisons where they do not want to make vagabonds worse than when they entered, they have hard labor for them. In the prison I went to see in my daydream, there was a hard labor room. Those who entered it were mostly very proud people. They held their heads very high and would not bend. They were birds with fine feathers and thought themselves quite unfit to be confined. But being in confinement, they resolved to work their own way out. They believed in the system of human merit, and hoped in due time to purchase their liberty.

They had saved up a few old counterfeit farthings, with which they thought they could, by-and-by, set themselves free, though my bright attendant plainly declared their folly and mistake. It was amusing and yet sad, to see what different works these people were about. Some of them toiled at a treadmill. They were going to the stars, they said, and there they were, tread, tread, tread, with all their might! But though they had been laboring for years and were never an inch higher, yet still they were confident that they were mounting to the skies.

Others were trying to make garments out of cobwebs. They were turning wheels and spinning at a great rate, and though it came to nothing, they worked on. They believed they should be free as soon as they had made a perfect garment, and I believe they will. In one place a company labored to build houses of sand. And when they had built up to some height the foundation always yielded—but they renewed their efforts—for they dreamed that if a substantial edifice were finished, they would then be allowed to go free. I saw some of them, strangely enough, endeavoring to make wedding garments out of fig leaves, by sewing them together. But the fig leaves were of a sort that were shriveled every night, so that they had to begin again, the next morning, their hopeless toil.

Some, I noticed, were trying to pump water out of a dry well. The veins stood out upon their brows like whipcords while they worked on without result. As they labored, like Samson, when he was grinding at the mill, I could hear the crack of whips upon their backs. I saw one ten-thronged whip called the Law, the terrible Law—each lash being a Commandment— and this was laid upon the bare backs and consciences of the prisoners. Yet still they kept on—work, work, work—and would not turn to the door of Divine Grace to find escape.

I saw some of them fall down fainting, whereupon their friends strove to bring them water in leaking vessels, called ceremonies. And there were some men called priests, who ran about with cups which had no bottoms in them, which they held up to the lips of these poor fainting wretches to give them comfort. As these men fainted, I thought they would die but they struggled up again to work. At last they could do no more and fell down under their burdens utterly broken in spirit. Then I saw that every prisoner who at last so fainted as to give up all hope of his own deliverance by merit, was taken up by a Shining Spirit and carried out of the prison and made free forever.

Then I thought within myself, “Surely, surely, these are proud selfrighteous persons who will not submit to be saved by Divine Grace, therefore He brought down their heart with labor. They fell down and there was none to help. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses.” I rejoiced and blessed God that there was such a prison to bring them to Jesus—yet I mourned that there were so many who still loved this house of bondage—and would not escape, though there stood one with his finger always pointing to the words—“By the works of the Law shall no flesh living be justified.” And to these other words, “By Grace are you saved through faith and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.”

I had seen enough of that prison, for I remember being there myself, and I have some of the scars upon my spirit now. I desire not to go back to it, but as I have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so would I walk in Him, knowing that if the Son makes me free I shall be free, indeed.

VII. We must not leave these corridors till we have peered into all the cells. For we may not come here again. As I passed along, there was another cell, called the low dungeon of despondency. I had read of this in the book of Jeremiah—a pit wherein there was no water, of which the Prophet said, “He has led me and brought me into darkness and not into light.” I looked down. It was a deep, dark, doleful place. Down in it I saw by the gloomy light of the warden’s lantern, a poor soul in very deep distress, and I bade him speak to me, and tell me his case.

He said he had been a great offender, and he knew it. He had been convicted of sin. He had heard the Gospel preached, and sometimes he thought it was for him, but at other times he felt sure it was not. There were seasons when his spirit could lay hold of Christ, but there were times when he dared not hope. Now and then, he said, some gleams of light did come. Once a week when he had his provision sent down, a little fresh bread and water, he did feel a little encouraged, but by the time Monday came—for his provision was always sent down on Sunday—he felt himself as low and miserable as ever.

I called out to him that there was a ladder up the side of the , and if he would but climb it, he might escape. But the poor soul could not feel the steps. I reminded him that he need not be where he was, for a Divine hand had let down ropes to draw him up, with soft cushions for his armholes. But I seemed as one that mocked him, and I heard some that tormented him, bid him call me “liar.” These were two villains called Mistrust and Timorous, who were bent upon keeping him here, even though they knew that he was an heir of Heaven, and had a right to liberty.

Finding myself powerless, I thus learned the more fully that the Lord must loose these prisoners or else they must be prisoners for many a day. Yet it was a great comfort to remember that no soul ever died in that dungeon if it had really felt its need of Christ and cried for mercy through His blood. No soul ever utterly perished while it called upon the name of the Lord. It might lie in the hold till it seemed as if the moss would grow on its eyelids, and the worms eat its mildewed corpse—but it never did perish, for in due time it was brought by simple faith to believe that Christ is “able to save, even to the uttermost.”

And then, by God’s Grace, they come up, O how quickly, from their low dungeon, and they sing more sweetly than others—“He has brought me up out of the horrible pit, and out of the miry clay. He has set my feet upon a rock and put a new song in my mouth and established my going.”

VIII. Shudder not at the clinging damps, for I must take you to another dungeon deeper than this last. It is called the inner prison. Paul and Silas were cast into the inner prison, and their feet made fast in the stocks, yet they sang in their prison. But in this dungeon no singing was ever heard. It is the hold of despair. I need not enlarge much in my description. I hope you have never been there. And I pray you never may. Ah, when a spirit once gets into that inner prison, comforts are turned at once into miseries, and the very promises of God appear to be in league for the destruction of the soul.

John Bunyan describes old Giant Despair and his crab tree club better than I can do it. Sorrowful is that ear which has heard the grating of the huge iron door, and full of terror is the heart which has felt the chilly damps of that horrible pit. Are any of you in that dungeon today? Do you say, “I have grieved the Spirit and He is gone. My day of Grace is over. I have sinned against light and knowledge. I am lost”? O Man, where are you? I must have you free. What a splendid trophy of Divine Grace you will make!

My Master loves to find such great sinners as you are, that He may exhibit His power to save. Oh, what a platform for my Lord to rear the standard of His love upon, when He shall have fought with you, and overcome you by His love! What a victory this shall be! How will the angels sing unto Him that loved the vilest of the vile, and ransomed the despairing one out of the hand of cruel foes. I have more hope for you than I have of others. For when the surgeon enters the hospital after an accident, he always goes to the worse case first.

If there is a man who has broken his finger only, “Oh, let him be,” they say, “he can wait.” But if there is a poor fellow who is much mangled, “Ah,” says the surgeon, “I must see to this case at once.” So is it with you. But the Lord must loose you. I cannot. Only this I know, if you would but believe me, there is a key which will fit the lock of your door of unbelief. Come, look over this bunch of keys—“He is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.” “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” “Come unto Me all you that labor and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest.” Brothers and Sisters, this inner dungeon can be opened by the Lord Jesus—

*“The gates of brass before Him burst, the iron fetters yield.”*

IX. I am getting to the end of this dark story, now, but let us tarry a moment at the grating of Satan’s torture chamber, for I have been in it. Yes, I have been tormented in it, and therefore I tell you no dream. I tarried in it till my soul melted because of agony, and therefore speak what I do know, and not what I have learned by report. There is a chamber in the experience of some men where the temptations of the devil exceed all belief. Read John Bunyan’s “Grace abounding,” if you would understand what I mean. The devil tempted him, he says, to doubt the existence of God. The truth of Scripture. The manhood of Christ. Then His deity.

And once, he says, he tempted him to say things which he will never write, lest he should pollute others. Ah, I remember a dark hour with myself when I, who do not remember to have even heard a blasphemy in my youth, much less to have uttered one, heard rushing through my soul an infinite number of curses and blasphemies against the Most High God, till I put my hand to my mouth lest they should be uttered, and I was cast down and cried to the merciful God that He would save me from them.

Oh, the foul things which Satan will inject into the spirit! The awful, damnable things, the offspring of his own infernal den—which he will foist upon us as our own thoughts, in such hosts, and so quickly one after the other—that the spirit has hardly time to swallow down its spittle. And though it hates and loathes these things, still it cannot escape from them, for it is in prison. Ah, well, thank God no soul ever perished through such profanities as those, for if we hate Them, they are none of ours. If we loathe them it is not our sin, but Satan’s, and God will, in due time, bring us to be free from these horrors.

Though the hosts of Hell may have ridden over our heads, let us cry, “Rejoice not over me, O my enemy, though I fall, yet shall I rise again.” Use your sword, poor prisoner! You have one. “It is written”—“the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.” Give your foe a deadly stab! Tell him that, “God IS, and that He is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him,” and you may yet see him spread his dragon wings and fly away. This, too, is a prison in which unbelief has confined both saint and sinner—and the Lord Himself must loose these prisoners.

X. Last of all, there is one dungeon which those confined in it have called the condemned cell. I was in it once. In that room the man writes bitter things against himself. He feels absolutely sure that the wrath of God abides on him. He wonders the stones beneath his feet do not open a grave to swallow him up. He is astonished that the walls of the prison do not compress and crush him into nothingness. He marvels that he has his breath, or that the blood in his veins does not turn into rivers of flame.

His spirit is in a dreadful state. He not only feels he shall be lost, but he thinks it is going to happen now.

The condemned cell in Newgate, I am told, is just in such a corner that the condemned can hear the building of the scaffold. Well do I remember hearing my scaffold put up, and the sound of the hammer of the lair, as piece after piece was put together! It appeared as if I heard the noise of the crowd of men and devils who would witness my eternal execution, all of them howling and yelling out their accursed things against my spirit. Then there was a big bell that tolled out the hours, and I thought that very soon the last moment would arrive, and I must mount the fatal scaffold to be cast away forever.

Oh, that condemned cell! Next to Tophet, there can be no state more wretched than that of a man who is brought here! And yet let me remind you that when a man is thoroughly condemned in his own conscience, he shall never be condemned. When he is once brought to see condemnation written on everything that he has done, though Hell may flame in his face, he shall be led out—but not to execution. Led out, but not to perish—“he shall be led forth with joy, and he shall go forth with peace. The mountains and the hills shall break forth before him into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.”

As we read in history of one who was met with a pardon just when the rope was round his neck, just so does God deal with poor souls. When they feel the rope about their necks, acknowledge that God’s sentence is just, and confess that if they perish they cannot complain, it is then that Sovereign Mercy steps in and cries, “I have blotted out like a cloud your iniquities, and like a thick cloud your sins. Your sins which are many are all forgiven you.”

And now, You glorious Jehovah, the Liberator, unto You be praises! All Your redeemed bless You and those who are today in their dungeons cry unto You! Stretch out Your bare arm, You mighty Deliverer! You who did send Your Son Jesus to redeem by blood, send now Your Spirit to set free by power, and this day, even this day, let multitudes rejoice in the liberty where You make them free. And unto Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Israel’s one Redeemer, be glory forever and ever! Amen.

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THE LORD’S FAMOUS TITLES  
NO. 2347

**A SERMON INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY, FEBRUARY 11, 1894.  
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 10, 1889.

**“The LORD looses the prisoners: the LORD opens the eyes of the blind: the LORD raises them that are bowed down: the LORD loves the righteous: the LORD preserves the strangers, He relieves the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked He turns upside down.” Psalm 146:7-9.**

This morning as well as I could, looking to God for help, I tried, in Christ’s place, to persuade men to be reconciled to God. I showed that there was a great spiritual drought and neither dew nor rain to be had except as God should send it. And I tried to press my hearers to go to God, to wait upon Him, to look to Him and, through the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ, to seek and find in God all that would be necessary for their eternal blessedness. [Sermon #2115, Volume 35—The Drought of Nature, the Rain of Grace and the Lesson Thereof—Read/download entire sermon at http://www.spurgeongems.org .] I pressed hard and some yielded, not to my pressure, but to a Divine impulse that went with my pleading! But there were some who did not yield, this morning, so I am going to make another attempt to win them, now, calling in our August Ally, even the Divine Spirit, without whom we can do nothing! May He bring many to God in penitence tonight!

You know that it helps men to come to a person when they know who he is, how good he is and how likely it is that they will find benefit by coming to him. My text tells us something about God, the Lord Jehovah. Five times the word occurs at the head of a sentence, Jehovah, Jehovah, Jehovah, Jehovah, Jehovah. Sometimes, when a great king or prince has a high day, a herald proclaims the titles of His Majesty. He is prince of this, and lord of that, and emperor of the other—too often a lot of empty sounds. But when we come to speak of

 God, every title of His falls short of what is His real Glory and honor! Tonight we have five of His titles put together, five wonderful achievements of God, five things for which the Lord would have Himself noted. I want each one of you here to hear about them and to say, “That encourages me,” or, “That cheers me,” or, “That helps me.” At any rate, out of the five great magnets that I will try to use, tonight, may one or other draw all our reluctant hearts to God, that we may find rest and peace in Him!  
I. There are five famous titles of God here. The first one is, THE EMANCIPATOR. Read the latter part of the seventh verse—“The Lord looses the prisoners.”

It is God’s Glory that He is an Emancipator. How often, in the Old Testament, and in the New, too, you find the Lord loosing the prisoners! It was so notably in the case of Joseph, when God brought him out of the prison and set him up as Lord over all Egypt. And it is still more notable in the case of Israel in Egypt when, with a high hand, and a stretched-out arm, the Lord brought forth His people from all the tyranny of Pharaoh, whom He destroyed in the Red Sea. You may keep on reading Scripture and you will continually find that it is true, “The Lord looses the prisoners.”

I want some of you who are here to catch at that thought. Are you mentally a prisoner under gloom, tonight? Did a cloud come over you a little while ago? Does it still rest upon your mind? Can no physician remove it? Listen to this word—“The Lord looses the prisoners.” Are you in the bondage of error? Have you been misled by false teachers? Have you fallen into mistakes about the Word of God? Are you denying the great Truths of God which would comfort you? Are you believing the great errors which becloud your spirit? Come to God for teaching! He can emancipate you from any form of error, even though you have been brought up in it from a child. “The Lord looses the prisoners.” Or have you come under some gross delusion? Are you the victim of some false impression which you cannot shake? I pray you, if you are harried and worried by temptations of Satan and he seems to have a firm foothold in your spirit, and cannot be driven out, let this text, like a silver bell, ring out comforting music to you, “The Lord looses the prisoners.” Oh, that you who are in mental bonds might be set free tonight!

There are, however, worse bonds than those, the chains of moral slavery. This man is a drunk and though he has taken the pledge, he cannot escape from the terrible craving which intemperate habits have brought upon him. Ah, Friend, come to Christ! He can take away the love of strong drink and set you free! “The Lord looses the prisoners” and He can do that for men and women who have given themselves up as lost. God have mercy upon wretched women when they become the prey of strong drink! To my certain knowledge, this evil is becoming much more common than it was a few years ago. More frequently do we have to mourn over fallen sisters than we did some years back. It is sad that it should be so, but the glorious fact remains that “the Lord looses the prisoners.” Do not despair, poor women! Have hope of deliverance! God can yet loose you from the bonds of strong drink.

Has anyone here fallen into bondage to a lust? Has some evil passion got a tight hold on you and you cannot break the bonds? There is One who can set you free! Yes, though you have been indulging in the evil for many years and seem to be wedded to an evil habit from which you cannot escape, still is it true, “The Lord looses the prisoners.” Do not trust in yourself to get rid of the evil, but look to Him who died for sin upon the Cross and trust in Him, for it is written, “He shall save His people from their sins.” I cannot stay, tonight, to mention all the kinds of moral bondage into which men and women fall, but let this sweet message be like a stray note from the harps of angels to all who are in bondage, “The Lord looses the prisoners.”

Perhaps you are held fast in spiritual bondage. This is where we are all by nature—we are born slaves. Are you, to-night, my Friend, conscious that you are a slave to sin? Are you fast bound by your trespasses? O spiritual slave, there is an Emancipator who can take your chains from you! “If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free, indeed, “and He is able to do it with a single word! Only trust Him, only yield yourselves up to Him as willing captives, and you shall be free from that moment! God make you free tonight! Yes, and He can loose you from every iniquity in which you may be enslaved!

There is another kind of emancipation which the Lord is constantly giving to the prisoners of hope, even deliverance from this present evil world. You are sick, tonight. You are sad, you are cast down and troubled because of the burden of the flesh. “The Lord looses the prisoners.” There is many a prisoner who has been loosed during the last week or two—dear members of this Church who had been confined to sick beds. The Lord has opened the cage door and the bird, set at liberty, has gone caroling up to the skies! The body has been put into the grave and lies imprisoned there in vile durance, but He shall come, who, Himself, rose from the dead, and when His feet shall touch the earth, again, and the angelic trumpet shall sound the summons, their bodies shall come forth—

*“From beds of dust and silent clay  
To realms of everlasting day,”*  
for “the Lord looses the prisoners!”

Here is a theme for a whole evening’s discourse, but I do not want to take up any more time over this point. I wish rather to drive home this wedge—if you are prisoners, if you are under any form of bondage—come to God in Christ Jesus and put your trust in Him, for, “the Lord looses the prisoners.”

II. We must hasten on to notice a second famous title for the Lord, that is, THE ILLUMINATOR—“The Lord opens the eyes of the blind.”  
If you will kindly look at your copies of the Bible, you will find that the words, “the eyes of,” are inserted in italics by the translators, so that the text really is, “The Lord opens the blind.” Ah, He opens the very soul of the blind and lets the Light of God in where there are no eyes! Have you not noticed that it is so? If anybody were to say to me, “Mr. Spurgeon, pick out a dozen of the happiest people that you know,” ten of them would be blind people! We have some dear Friends, members of this Church, who are among the happiest souls that God has ever made! It is long since they saw the light, but God has opened their hearts in such a way that they enjoy a wonderful quietness of spirit, great placidity of mind and an inward Light and splendor which persons with eyes might well envy! I have noticed that blind people are often among the happiest people and blind Christians certainly might take the chief place among us for their quiet and rest of mind! The Lord Jesus Christ opens the blind—He comes and sheds a Light when the windows of the body are closed—and gives Light within, so that they are full of brightness.  
But if you like to take the text as it is in our translation, it will do very well. When the Lord Jesus Christ was here, He opened the eyes of the blind. He touched many a sightless eye, and the light streamed in! Read the Evangels through and you will find this miracle constantly recurring. Blindness is a very common ailment in the East and the miracle of recovering the sight of the blind was, therefore, frequent with our Lord.  
Next, the Lord enables blind souls to see. Here is a great mercy. The Lord has opened the eyes of many a man who could not see himself and so proved how blind he was—and could not see the Lord and so showed, still more, how blind he was. The Lord has given the inner sight to many a man who was without spiritual understanding, to whom the Gospel seemed a great mystery, of which he could make neither heads nor tails. The Lord has made the scales to fall from many blind mental eyes and enabled those who were blind, first, to see themselves, and then to see their Savior. Blessed be His name!  
And whenever the blind of the earth fall asleep in Jesus and enter into Heaven, they shall have no blindness in Glory. There, their eyes shall see the King in His beauty—they shall behold His face and rejoice in His love. Jehovah is a great Eye-Opener—cannot some of you blind people catch at this Truth of God and say—“Then we will come to Him, for we need to have our eyes opened”?  
Perhaps someone says, “Sir, I do not quite comprehend all that you say. I have been a hearer for some time and I want to understand the Gospel. I try to grasp it, but, somehow, I cannot get at the Truth of God.” Come, in prayerful faith, to God, Himself, tonight, and He will explain it to you! I can hold the Light of God to your eyes, but, if they are blind, I cannot make you see. But the Lord can give the sight as well as the Light and I beseech you to ask it at His hands, tonight. There is nothing really difficult in the Gospel and if you will come to Jesus like a teachable child and ask to be instructed of Him, you will find that it is all plain to him that believes. Of the way of holiness it is written, “The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.”  
If you come to God for Grace, dear Friend, He will never limit you. You need not be poor Christians—you may be “rich to all the intents of bliss.” You need not have shallow Grace—you may, if you wish, get into “waters to swim in.” Giving will not impoverish Him, withholding will not enrich Him, but, rather, giving enriches Him, it enriches His very heart with great joy, for He delights to give! Come, and take freely, and learn the liberality of God! I remember one who called himself, “a gentlemancommoner upon the bounty of God.” Some of us can take the same title. We have had a hand basket portion for many years—not a sack full at a time, but a full hand basket! That is a good way of living. If a girl gets a portion from her father and the old gentleman never gives her anything else, she does not receive so much as her sister who has a hand basket portion many days in the week. A present often comes to her from the old house at home. Father sends it every time with his love and she receives more love and more thought, and he, too, receives more gratitude in return, perhaps, than if he had given his daughter one lump sum, and then his generosity was all over. It is a blessed way of learning the liberality of God, to be receiving freely and receiving

 continually from Him! “He gives more Grace.”  
Come, then, to God by Jesus Christ, because He is, first, the Emancipator and, secondly, the Illuminator.  
III. Now for the third bright title of the Lord. That is, THE COMFORTER. Read the middle sentence of verse eight—“The Lord raises them that are bowed down.”  
Some are bowed down with bereavement. Well may she be bowed down who has just committed to the earth the beloved of her heart. And well may he go mourning whose first-born son has been taken from him by a sudden stroke. Well may some lament who have lost the choicest friend that man ever had, and find that half their life is gone in the death of that beloved one, yet, “The Lord raises them that are bowed down.” Come, tell your grief to Him who pitied the widow at the gate of Nain! Come, pour out your sorrow before Him who wept with the beloved sisters at Bethany when Lazarus was dead! He can help you, for He, “raises them that are bowed down.”  
Some are bowed down sadly by the burdens of life. They have more to carry than most men have. They stagger along, from day to day, beneath a load that threatens to crush them into the dust. Oh, come to my Lord who gives new strength to bear burdens, for He raises up those that are bowed down! It is amazing what a man can do when God has laid His hand on him and said to him, “Be strong.” You are faint and you will faint without your God, but you will be strong if you come and trust Him, for, “Jehovah raises them that are bowed down.”  
Maybe you are bowed down with inward distress. Ah, there is no cure for some forms of distress but to go straight away to God! The scandal of our ministry is the despondency that we cannot disperse. How often I have come down from talking with some dear friends, here, whose minds have been distracted, and I have had to confess myself, “dead beat.” God has helped me to comfort many—it is my lot, almost wherever I may be, to be followed by persons suffering in mind. I sometimes laugh and tell them that “birds of a feather flock together” and that they must think me halfcracked and so they come to me to sympathize with them! Well, so be it— there is a kind of sympathy between me and them. But I have learned this lesson, that to bring comfort to a diseased mind is not within the preacher’s power except his Master shall specially qualify him for the task and, in any case, I say to you, dear troubled Friends, go straight away to Him of whom you read these sweet words, “The Lord raises them that are bowed down.”  
Have I the extreme joy, tonight, of addressing in this congregation one who is bowed down by a sense of sin? Where are you, Magdalene, hiding your face in tears? Where are you, poor erring prodigal, longing to come back to your Father, but too bowed down to start upon the journey? Listen—“The Lord raises them that are bowed down.” He loves to find the poor sinner crouching on the dunghill, putting his head into the dust in very despair of heart, and He delights to come and put His hand upon him and say, “Stand upon your feet; fear not.” There is a great God of mercies who glories in doing wonders of Grace, forgiving even the blackest sin! I say again, I would like to ring this text like a silver bell in the ears of every penitent sinner here, and say, “The Lord raises them that are bowed down.”  
IV. We are getting on with our text, for we have come to the fourth great title. God is THE REWARDER—“The Lord loves the righteous.” Come, dear Friends, here is a wafer made with honey! Here is a feast of fat things, full of marrow for you who are the people of God, you whom He has accounted righteous because the perfect righteousness of Christ has been imputed to you!  
First, “the Lord loves the righteous” with a love of complacency. He takes delight in them. He loves them, not merely with a love of benevolence that desires their good, but He looks with pleasure and delight at righteous men, those whom He has made righteous, those who love Him because they are righteous and who are like He in being righteous. The Lord looks at them and rejoices over them. How that ought to cheer any of you who have been made holy by God’s Grace! The Lord’s delight is in you! He calls you His Hephzibahs, saying, “My delight is in them.” Wherever there is anything of Christ, anything of righteousness, anything of holiness, there is evidence of the Lord’s love! So, in the first place, “the Lord loves the righteous” with a love of complacency.  
He does more than that. He loves the righteous with a love of communion. Remember how the Lord puts it, by the mouth of Isaiah, “For thus says the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy. I dwell in the high and holy place, with him, also, that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” I doubt not that God often talks with righteous men. “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.” He lets them speak to Him and He speaks to them in return. Do you know anything about this communion with God? If you do not, never say that others do not, for we are as honest and truthful as you are—and we bear our testimony that there is such a thing as walking with God! We declare, from happy, heartfelt experience, that there is such a thing as talking with God, knowing that He loves us and that His love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us.  
God also loves His people with a love of favor. He loves them so that He will give them anything that they need. Yes, He has said, through the Psalmist, “No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly.” He loves the righteous so that, when they go into their chamber to pray to Him, He may let them plead a little while because it is for their good to do so, but He will always yield to their desires. He has said, “Delight yourself, also, in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.” He does that with His people. The Lord loves the righteous so as to favor them with extraordinary blessings, things of which I cannot talk, here, for there is many a love-passage between Christ and the righteous soul that must never be told. We do not talk of our love-passages in the streets—that would be half profane. Nor can we even tell of them here. There are favors which the Lord shows to His righteous people, which they know, and He knows, but which no one else can know till that day when all things shall be revealed!  
And once more, the Lord loves the righteous so that He will honor them. If men are righteous, the world will hate them and, as a proof of its hatred, it will begin to splatter them. There are always some in the world who say, “Throw plenty of mud, some of it will stick,” and oh, how they delight to throw it! Their hands seem to take to the dirt naturally. But, Beloved, if you follow God fully, your character will never be long tarnished. Do not try to answer those who slander you. If a donkey kicked you, would you kick the donkey? If a fool brings a charge against you, do not reply to him. Let him rail on—God will vindicate you. Remember that Psalm from which I quoted just now, the thirty-seventh—“commit your way unto the Lord; 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 may even happen to a man that he may perform an action that will never be understood while he lives. But the true man of God lives for eternity, not for time. He says, “I do not care if it takes 500 years for the righteousness of my action to be seen by my fellow men, it will not make it any more righteous when they do see it, nor will it be any less righteous while they do not see it! What have I to do with men? I serve the living God.” If you get into that condition of heart, you can trust your reputation, your life, your usefulness entirely with God, for “the Lord loves the righteous.” A day shall come when all the world shall know it, when they who are righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father, and God shall say of them, “Well done, good and faithful servants, enter into the joy of your Lord.”  
Now, then, will you not come to Him, since His favorites are the best people in all the world? Kings and princes have often been known to choose their associates among the worst of their subjects—men who ministered to their baser passions. The favorites of kings have often been the offscouring of the earth, but our King loves the righteous! He will have none to be His courtiers, to come near to Him, to dwell before His face, but those who walk uprightly through His mighty Grace! I think that there is something very inviting there to you who are of a true heart, something which ought to induce you to come to such a God as this—the Lord who loves the righteous.  
V. But now, last of all, and, perhaps, sweetest of all, the fifth name of God is THE PRESERVER—“The Lord preserves the strangers; He relieves the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked He turns upside down.” My time is so nearly gone that I can only just ask you to apply, by God’s help, the few words that I shall say.  
Notice, first, that God preserves strangers. In all nations, in the olden times, strangers were driven out. They did not want any foreigners settling among them. In this country, in almost every village, it used to be the practice for a stranger to be regarded as a kind of mad dog. And if he happened to wear a different garb from that of the villagers, all the boys hooted him. It seems that our depraved humanity is naturally unkind to strangers! I often hear people say, even now, “Oh, he is a foreigner!” O you proud Englishman! Is he not as good as you? You are a foreigner when you get to the other side of the English Channel! It was God’s order to His ancient people that they were to be kind to strangers. Wherever they came, they were to be allowed to dwell and were to be taken care of. God put it thus to Israel—“You shall neither vex a stranger, nor oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” And because God loved them when they were strangers in Egypt, they were to take special care of strangers and foreigners who came into their midst.

What a grand trait this is in God’s Character, “The Lord preserves the strangers!” If any of you feel to be strangers here, tonight. If you are strangers to religion, strangers to religious observances, strangers to everything that is good. If you feel, when you hear the Gospel, that you are altogether a stranger to it—it sounds so odd in your ears, come along, dear Stranger, “The Lord preserves the strangers!” Come under the shadow of His wings and you shall find shelter there. Father is dead, mother is dead, friends are all gone and even in the very village where you were born you are a stranger—come along, your God is not dead, your Savior lives—“The Lord preserves the strangers.”  
Then notice the next sentence in our text—“He relieves the fatherless and widow.” If you turn to the first Books of the Bible, you will see, there, God’s great care of the fatherless and the widow. Who had the tithes? Well, the Levites, but also the poor, and the stranger, and the fatherless and the widow! If you look at Deuteronomy 14:28, or 26:12, you will find that the tithes were not exclusively for the priests, but they were also for the widow, the fatherless and the strangers. Besides this, the Israelites were never to glean their fields twice, for the gleanings were for the widow and the fatherless. And they were never to shake the olive tree or any fruit tree twice, but to leave what remained upon it for the widow and the fatherless. There was also this Law of God made, that they should never take as a pledge the raiment of a widow. That is pretty often done in London, but it might not be done, then—the garment of the widow might never be taken in pledge. Wherever the legislation of God for His people touched upon the widow and the fatherless, it was immeasurably kind. Now, then, you who feel like widows. You who have lost your joy and earthly comfort. You who feel like the fatherless and say, “No man cares for my soul,” oh, may the sweet Spirit of the Lord entice you to come to Him, for, as I reminded you in the reading, “A father of the fatherless and a judge of the widows is God in His holy habitation.”  
But the view of God’s Character would not be complete if it were not added, “The way of the wicked He turns upside down.” You see, the godly and they who trust God are always in danger from the wicked, but He turns the way of the wicked upside down! Take an example. Joseph’s brothers sell him into Egypt and make a slave of him. God turns this arrangement upside down and makes a prince of him! Think of Mordecai. Haman will have him hanged—he has the gallows ready, but Haman is hanged on his own gallows! God knows how to make the malice of men promote the benefit of those against whom they turn their cruelty! “The way of the wicked He turns upside down.”  
Be you just and fear not! Rest in Christ’s atoning Sacrifice! Trust Him only! Come to your God and be His servant from this day and forever, and you shall see how He will break your bonds, open your eyes, cheer your spirit, indulge you with His love and preserve you even to the end! “There shall no evil befall you, neither shall any plague come near your dwelling.” God bless you, dear Friends, and may you all come to God, tonight, through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALM 146; LUKE 17:11-19**

Psalm 146:1. Praise you the LORD. Or, “Hallelujah.” I am sorry to see that great word, Hallelujah, Hallelu-Jah, praise to Jah, Jehovah, become so hackneyed as it is, by talk about “Hallelujah lasses,” and Hallelujah—I know not what. The Jews will not even pronounce the word Jah, or write it. It seems a great pity that it should be thus dragged in the dirt by Gentiles. “Praise you the Lord.” Whenever you make use of the word Hallelujah, let it be with the due reverence which should be given to that blessed name, for remember, “the Lord will not hold him guiltless that uses His name in vain.”

1. Praise the LORD, O my Soul. Whatever we exhort others to do, we should be ready to do ourselves. Yes, our own soul should praise the Lord most of all, since, if we rightly know our obligations, no one in the world is so much indebted to God as each one of us should feel himself to be. “Praise the Lord, O my Soul.” Not my lips, only, but my innermost spirit, for soul-music is the soul of music—“Praise the Lord, O my Soul.”

2. While I live will I praise the LORD: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being. I will lisp His praises when I can do no more. When my being seems to be dried up, in the weakness of the death-throe, still, “I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.”

3. Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. What is the connection, here, between praising God and not trusting man? Why, this connection, that we never praise God better than by exercising faith in Him! Quiet trust is among the sweetest music that reaches the heart of God and when we put our trust in man, we rob God of His Glory—we are giving to others the confidence which belongs, alone, to Him.

4. His breath goes forth, he returns to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish. What is man—with a life dependent upon his breath, such a vapory thing, such a thin, unsubstantial thing is human life—what is he that we should trust in him?

5. Happy is he that has the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God. He is the happy man who has learned to trust in the invisible God.

6. Which made Heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is: which keeps the Truth of God forever. Never did His promise fail. Perhaps, dear Brothers and Sisters, you have not pleaded the promises enough of late. Then the Mercy Seat is the place where promises must be pleaded, with the certainty that then they shall be fulfilled.

7. Which executes judgment for the oppressed: which gives food to the hungry. The LORD looses the prisoners. Souls that are in bondage will never get freedom till the Lord looses them! Oh, that prisoners of hope, who are here, this evening, might have Grace to look to God! You cannot pick the lock of your prison, yourself, nor forge your way through the iron bars of despair, but, “the Lord looses the prisoners.” Yes, but when they get loose, they are blind, for man, by nature, is blinded by sin! Therefore the Psalmist adds—

8. The LORD opens the eyes of the blind. He will not only give you liberty, but understanding, insight into His Word, a knowledge of Himself! Yes, but when men get their eyes opened, they see much to make them sorry and He that increases knowledge often increases sorrow! Yes, but look at the next words—

8. The LORD raises them that are bowed down. He can take away depression of spirit and relieve the heart of its burdens and, as the woman who was bowed down for many years, was made straight by the word of Christ, so can those that suffer from mental infirmity be restored. And best of all—

8. The LORD loves the righteous. He loves them and His love is wealth and health. The love of God is all a creature needs.  
9. The Lord preserves the strangers. When our eyes are opened and we are no more bowed down, but feel we have a sense of God’s love, yet we still know that we are exiles, banished ones, strangers and foreigners, as all our fathers were. It is comforting, therefore, to be assured that, “the Lord preserves the strangers.”

9. He relieves the fatherless and widow. He does so literally—“A Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widows is God in His holy habitation.” He also relieves such spiritually. When any feel themselves to be poverty-stricken and unable to help themselves, let them look to Him who is both able and willing to succor them, for, “He relieves the fatherless and the widow.”

9. But the way of the wicked He turns upside down. Where they looked for joy, they experienced disappointment. Where they expected success, they met with defeat, and whereas they thought to heap to themselves pleasures according to their lusts, they find that they have only increased their misery.

10. The LORD shall reign forever, even your God, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise you the LORD. The Sovereignty of God should be the delight of His people. God anywhere is blessed, but God on His Throne should make His people shout their Hallelujahs with all their heart. Now let us read in the New Testament about one who glorified God and gave thanks to Jesus.

Luke 17: 11, 12. And it came to pass, as He went to Jerusalem, that He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee. And as He entered into a certain village, there met Him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: Lepers were allowed to enter villages, but not to go into the large walled towns. They were, however, commanded to stand at a certain distance from other people—and these men did so. This must have been a terrible sight! Ten men afflicted with such a horrible disease, all in one group! It shows how prevalent, at that time, was this disease, now happily so rare, at least among us—“Ten men that were lepers.” It seemed as if the effect of sin in men became more conspicuous in the day when the Great Healer of men was here in Person. Then Satan’s chain was lengthened that he might have greater power over the bodies of men, that his Master might subdue him and that Christ Jesus the Lord might have the greater victory over the Prince of Darkness.

13, 14. And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us! And when He saw them, He said unto them, go show yourselves unto the priests. There was a tacit promise in that that they should be healed, for, of course, the showing themselves to the priests was not that they might be pronounced unclean, for they were so pronounced already by their own confession, but that they might be pronounced clean! They were to go to the priests and there was an implied promise that if they so went, when the priests looked upon them they would be healed.

14-16. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back and, with a loud voice, glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. He was probably the only one out of the 10 that was a Samaritan. Though Jews and Samaritans did not usually agree, yet, as sorrow brings a man strange bedfellows, so in this case, these partners in a general sorrow forgot their sectarianism and were blended into one sad company. Now that they were all healed, only

 one felt true gratitude to God, and to his Benefactor—“and he was a Samaritan.”

It is very singular to notice that Luke tells us that this man glorified God, “with a loud voice.” We have, sometimes, heard complaints that, at certain revival meetings, the singing was very loud and there was even shouting. Let the converts shout, Brothers and Sisters, let them shout! They have good reason to shout, for Christ has made them whole. We have a great deal too much of respectable death about us—let us have a little noisy life. I would sooner by half hear the praises of God shouted with a loud voice than hear the mockery of praise in a tone that is scarcely to be heard, while some machine grinds out music to God’s glory—and men forget to sing or are drowned in loud bursts of wind from the instrument! Do not be ashamed to let it be known that you are saved. Praise the Lord with all your might and, if they say that you are excited, tell them that you are and that you wonder if anybody could help being excited if he had been healed of leprosy or had his sins forgiven!

But, at the same time, note the humility as well as the zeal of this man—he “fell down on his face at His feet.” I would like to see more of this action. In some revivals, there is plenty of shouting, but very little falling down on the face at Christ’s feet. Oh, for deep prostration of spirit, a humble waiting upon God, a gracious, tender confession of thanks to Him for all that He has done for poor leprous sinners!

17, 18. And Jesus answering, said, Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger? Often those who are thought to be the worst of people turn out the best. Many of the most precious pearls have been found in the deepest sea and some of the most grateful hearts have been discovered among those who were most immersed in sin and error.

19. And He said unto him, arise, go your way; your faith has made you whole. Christ uses the word, “whole,” in an emphatic sense—“Not only your body, but also your soul is made whole, and you are holy from this day.” There is a wonderful connection between these two words, “whole,” and, “holy.” A holy man is a whole man, but he who is not holy is unsound and not whole in the sight of God. The Lord make us wholly holy for Christ’s sake! Amen.

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FEARING AND HOPING  
NO. 2524

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JULY 4, 1897. DELIVERED BY C. H, SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON THURSDAY EVENING, MAY 28, 1885.

**“The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy.”  
Psalm 147:11.**

This Psalm, I think, was intended to set forth the singularity of God. In it we are exhorted to praise Him who is our God and to give honor and glory to Him alone. The Psalmist does not dwell, here, upon those attributes which usually call forth our praise, or the praises of men in general, but he touches some special strings of the harp from which he brings forth joyous music for the children of Zion, that they may be glad in their King. This is one of the notes of the Psalm—that although God, Himself is so high, He has a very tender regard toward those who are lowly. He turns His thoughts, not to those who are brilliant and attractive, but to those who are broken in heart and wounded in spirit! While the gods of the heathen are pictured in their mythologies as dealing with kingdoms and with wars and with other matters upon a large scale, this gracious God of ours is so infinitely condescending that He waters the grass, feeds the cattle and listens to the cries of young ravens! This is, indeed, a specialty with God and one which unconverted men do not readily discover, or even think much about when it is spoken of in their hearing. But you who know Him, you who love Him, delight in these wondrous condescension of His Grace—His dealing in mercy with the contrite and broken in spirit, His filling Heaven and yet filling you, His ruling the stars and yet managing your mean affairs—His fiat that creates a universe and His gentle promises suited to the understanding of a child, to the healing of a widow’s sorrow, and the loosing of the bonds of the prisoner! Oh, yes, we feel that we are bound to our God with cords of a man and with bands of love! He considers us when we are of low estate, therefore we will give all diligence to acquaint ourselves with Him that we may be at peace.

Having spoken of the singularity of God, the Psalmist dwells, in the verse before us, upon the specialty of His favor. Great kings are known to have their favorite objects in which they delight with peculiar pleasure. Many monarchs have gloried in “the strength of a horse.” Their squadrons of cavalry have been their confidence. Others have taken more delight in “the legs of a man.” The muscles and sinews of their soldiers have been their boast. You must have noticed, in the Assyrian sculptures, the importance that was attached by the workmen and by the monarch, also, to “the legs of a man.” They represent the warriors as brawny and strong, swift in running and firm in holding their place in the day of battle. But our God takes no delight in cavalry or infantry! No armies of horse or foot soldiers give Him any gladness—the Lord takes pleasure in very different persons from these. His delight, His joy, His solace—if we may use such a word—are found in other company than that which is martial. He turns His eyes quite another way. “The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy.”

I. First of all, dear Friends, let us think of THE OBJECTS OF DIVINE FAVOR AS HERE DISTINGUISHED.

They are distinguished, first, from physical strength. I have already told you what is meant by the Psalmist in the previous verse, “He delights not in the strength of the horse: He takes not pleasure in the legs of a man.” When a man was to be chosen to be king over Israel, the Lord, who knew the weakness of the people, gave to them one who was head and shoulders above the rest of them. It is natural to men to have regard to the comeliness of the person and the stature and apparent strength of the individual who is to rule over them. And, oftentimes, men and women are so foolish as to imagine that there is something about the beauty of their face, or the excellence of their person that should not only make their fellow creatures admire them, but should make their God admire them, too! True, there are old proverbs which bid us think lightly of the kind of beauty which is but skin deep and that tell us that “handsome is that handsome does.” But still, there is the temptation in a man who finds himself healthy, vigorous and strong—the personification of power—to fancy that, as he has a measure of influence over his fellows, he may have favor with God.

But, ah, that would be indeed a vain and idle dream! Let no man thus delude himself. You, good Sir, with all your beauty and your strength, may be but a day’s march from the grave! Then will you be food for worms, like the rest of those who have gone before you! “Beauty is vain.” What is man, “whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of?” God thinks nothing of you in that matter of your personal strength and beauty, however greatly you may pride yourself thereon! Physical force is found in a greater degree in a horse than in a man—and if there were to be some honor given to man because of his physical strength, it ought to be given still more to the rhinoceros, or to the elephant, or to the whale! Therefore, dear Friends, you can clearly see how absurd it would be for a man to value himself upon his bodily comeliness or strength.

There are not many, I should think, who would fall into that gross absurdity, but there are some who seem to think that mental vigor will surely be respected of God. The man who is the deepest thinker, who can look into the very heart of a subject, who can see farthest into a millstone—surely he shall have some commendation from God! And there is a kind of superstition current that if a man has been very clever, if he has written some very entertaining books, it must be all right with him! Straightway, he who in his life sneered at saintship is enrolled among the saints! And for anyone to question the character of such a person, even though it may be well known that it was utterly deficient in every kind of virtue before God, is almost regarded as treason against the majesty of literature. Well, such a delusion may rule the shallow minds that yield to it, but rest you assured that cleverness, ability, culture and learning, in and of themselves, have no influence with the Most High! He delights in the lowliest of men, when they turn to Him, when they sit at Jesus’ feet and learn His Words. But the greatest conceivable ability, if it is united with forgetfulness of God, will ensure to its possessor a more terrible punishment from the right hand of God than would have fallen upon the man had he been ignorant and without gifts, “for unto whomever much is given, of him shall be much required.”

It is a good thing to be learned and wise, and the more you can cultivate your minds, the better, but remember the words of the Apostle— “Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called.” And, oftentimes, the wisdom which is merely that of the mind may even prove like scales upon the spiritual eyes, hiding from the soul the blessed sight which alone can save it! It is true mentally as well as physically, that the Lord takes no pleasure in any of the faculties which a man possesses if he is destitute of Grace.

Another thing in which the Lord takes no pleasure is that self-reliance which is much cried up nowadays. This is only another form of “the strength of the horse” and “the legs of a man.” Some persons proudly say that they are self-made men—and I generally find that they worship their makers. Having made themselves, they are peculiarly devoted to themselves. But a man who is self-made is badly made! If God does not make him anew, it would have been better for him never to have been made! That which comes of man is but a polluted stream from an impure source—out of evil comes evil, and from a depraved nature comes depravity. It is only when God makes us new creatures in Christ Jesus that it is any joy for us to be creatures at all! And all the praise must be given to Him. “It is He that has made us, and not we ourselves,” if this day, “we are His people and the sheep of His pasture.” Therefore, although you should exercise every faculty that you possess and push with might and main in the battle of life, do not rely on yourself.

It is foolish to worship a god of wood, or of stone. It is equally foolish to worship a god of flesh. And it is most foolish when that god of flesh is yourself! Worship the Lord, trust in God—“Trust in Him at all times; you people, pour out your heart before Him.” “Cursed is the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good comes; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusts in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreads out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat comes, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.” The Lord takes not pleasure in the boastful self-dependence wherein some glory.

Nor, dear Friends, do I think that God takes pleasure in any mere capacity for service which exists in any of us, whoever we may be. “The strength of the horse” and, “the legs of a man” do but set forth what I now intend to speak of. Suppose a man is a child of God and a preacher of the Word—and that he possesses peculiar gifts to set forth the Truth of God—let him not, therefore, exalt himself, for in mere capacity, even though it is the capacity to preach the Gospel, God takes no pleasure! A preacher has a talent which brings with it great responsibility—it will not be a blessing bringing a reward unless Grace is given to him to use it to his Lord’s Glory!

Are you, dear Friend, peculiarly adapted for teaching in the Sunday school, and has God put honor upon you there? Then remember that what your Master will look to will not be your ability, but your fidelity— not your capacious mind, your firm grasp of the Truth of God, and your power to impart it to others—but the Grace with which you use this faculty and this ability. I believe that there may be many a godly woman who teaches her handful of infants to do little more than read, and who is scarcely able to convey a profound idea to their minds, who, nevertheless, may be a greater blessing than that teacher who has gathered many about him, whom he has been able to instruct with marked ability, but without corresponding Grace. I am sure that it would have been better for some of us who have to come before thousands of hearers with our message and yet we are not be faithful to your souls—if we had occupied the lowliest pulpit and preached to only 10 or 20 people, or if we had never spoken at all! For God values none of us by our position, or our ability, or even by our apparent success! He does not take pleasure in all this of itself—it is in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy—in our spiritual relationship to Himself and our spiritual dealings with Himself, that He does have a keen delight. All the rest may or may not be delightful to Him. He may or may not look upon it with complacency—that will entirely depend upon whether we are those who fear Him and who hope in His mercy!

II. Now, in the second place, I want your earnest attention while I notice THE OBJECTS OF DIVINE FAVOR AS THEY ARE HERE DESCRIBED. “Them that fear Him: those that hope in His mercy.”

You see, dear Friends, these are things which relate to God. God’s favor is displayed to those who fear Him and who hope in His mercy. You are truly, dear Friend, what you are towards God, and God regards you according to what you are in reference to Himself. If you are a philanthropist, a lover of mankind—that is well as far as it goes, but it is always evil to put the second table of the Commandments before the first. The first is, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind.” And then the second table bids you, “love your neighbor as yourself.” But he who does not love his God has not learned aright how to love his neighbor! There is a worm at the core of philanthropy when it is not accompanied with true religion. Depend upon it, that what you are toward your God, that you really are, and so does He regard you. What if you fear evil? Yet if you fear not Him, you are not really His! And what if you have hope this way or that? Yet you are not right before Him unless you have hope in His mercy! You have not come to your right condition unless your emotions, joyous or sorrowful, have relation to Him.

Notice, next, that this description of character applies to true servants of God in their earliest and weakest form. Observe, it is not said, here, that God has pleasure in those who possess full assurance, though that is most true, but He has pleasure in “them that fear Him”—who can get no further in the spiritual life than to fear the Lord, and who, as yet, even have something of the spirit of bondage connected with that fear! Yet, if there is also in them a little of that brightness which comes of hoping in His mercy, the Lord takes pleasure even in such poor feeble creatures! They have not yet attained to full confidence in God’s mercy—they are only hoping in it at present—yet, if it is a real fear of Him and a true hope in His mercy, however little it may be, the Lord takes pleasure in them! You do not take much pleasure in yourself, poor hoping-fearing one, do you? That may be and it may be quite consistent with God’s taking pleasure in you! There are some who take pleasure in themselves, but in whom God has no pleasure—and there are many who loathe themselves in their own sight, who, nevertheless, are delightful in the sight of the Most High! Our judgment of ourselves is a very different thing from God’s judgment of us.

Dear Heart, do you fear to come before God because of your sin? Do you tremblingly stretch out your finger to touch the hem of your Savior’s garment, that you may be made whole? Is your faith feeble? Do you trust His Word, but weakly? He will not, therefore, spurn you, but will receive you, for, as He healed the woman who came behind Him in the crowd and bade her go in peace, so will He do with you. “The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy.” If they never get beyond that point for the present, they shall get into a higher stage, by-and-by, but even now the Lord takes pleasure in them! “Therefore comfort one another with these words.” The description in our text is intended to embrace the weakest forms of spiritual life. I am sure it is, because of the kind of grammatical structure between our text and the verse that precedes it—“He delights not in the strength of the horse: He takes not pleasure in the legs of a man.” That is, He has no pleasure in the strong things, the powerful, the vigorous, but He has pleasure in the weak, though true—in the trembling, though sincere. He takes pleasure in those who are so little that all we can say of them is that they fear Him and that they hope in His mercy!

Yet I also think that this description comprises the noblest form of religion in the very highest degree of it. After all, we do not get beyond this point—fearing God and hoping in His mercy! A little child grows, but when it has grown to manhood, it is the same being as when it was a child. It has not grown another eye, or another hand, or another foot—all that is in it when it is a man, was in it when it was a child! In like manner, all the Divine Graces of our holy religion are in the new-born babe in Grace—not perceptibly as yet, nor called into action, but they are all there—and when the babe in Grace shall reach the full stature of a man in Christ Jesus, there will be in him just what there was in him when he was a little and weak child. Therefore, let us grow as we may, we shall always fear God. Perfect love casts out the fear that has torment, but not that filial fear which is here meant, that child-like reverence and holy awe of the Most High that shall grow and shall deepen, world without end.

And as to hope, Beloved, why, we had hope when we began our spiritual life, and we still have hope—and that hope will continue with us—I will not say in Heaven, though I think it will, for there is something to hope for in the disembodied state. We shall hope for the Day of Resurrection and there will be something to hope for even in the resurrection, for, throughout the ages we shall have a good hope that still we shall be “forever with the Lord.” Certainly, he who knows God best, fears Him most and also hopes in Him most! Fear deepens and hope rises and I believe that very much in proportion as a man has the fear of God before his eyes, he will have a hope in God within his heart. And as he learns to hope in God, and to hope nowhere else, his fear of God will become more and more operative upon his entire nature and life.

I should like you also to notice that the persons favored of God are represented as a sort of sacred blending of different characters. “Them that fear Him”—“those that hope in His mercy.” These two things, fear of God and hope in His mercy, go well together, and what God has joined, let no man put asunder! Blessed is that man who has a trembling fear concerning his sinnership, who knows that he deserves the deepest Hell, bows before God under the burden of sin and always loathes himself to think that he should have been such a sinner—but who also hopes in God’s mercy! He is sure of sin, but equally sure of sin’s forgiveness. He is humbled by guilt, but equally rejoicing in the fullness of that Atonement which has covered his transgression and cast his iniquity into the depths of the sea! I fear because I am such a great sinner. I hope because Christ is such a great Savior! I am down in the very depths whenever I think of my guilt, crying out unto God, but I am also up in the very heights as I think of the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ and am led, thereby, to hope in the mercy of God! It is a beautiful blend, that fear of God, and hope in His mercy!

It is well every day to have this sacred blending in another fashion, to be always afraid of yourself, fearful to begin the day without praying, “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,” never indulging in self-confidence in the least, yet always hoping in the mercy of God that He will keep you, and never suffer you to perish, for He has said, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give unto them eternal life: and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of My hand.” This is a blessed blending of fear and hope, fearing before God, knowing what a frail and feeble creature you are and yet confident in the Lord, knowing how mighty, how faithful and how unchangeable He is to keep the souls that are committed to His care!

Then there is that holy form of fear which causes a jealous anxiety concerning yourself. I do not wish to ever be rid of that kind of fear.  
There is a doubting of yourself which it is well to cultivate until honest and faithful self-examination has enabled you, in all impartiality, to conclude that you are the child of God. But, oh, never let that fear degenerate into a looking to frames and feelings as your ground of confidence! Let your hope always be in God’s mercy, whatever may be the result of your self-examination. These two things should always go together— “Lord, search me, and try me, and know my ways.” “Yet, Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You, and that my hope is fixed upon You, and I do not doubt that You are able to keep that which I have committed to You.” There, you see, is the fear of the Lord, but there is also hope in His mercy. And these two streams run side by side in the life of the man in whom God takes pleasure.  
Now, Brothers and Sisters, to turn the text around the other way, I trust we shall always have a hope of final perseverance. He who has began the good work in us will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Are we, therefore, as some suppose we might be, careless about how we live? Oh, no! We are afraid of sinning! The very shadow of sin is obnoxious to us! We hate the garment spotted by the flesh. The very appearance of evil terrifies us. How is that consistent with the full belief in our perseverance unto the end? If we cannot explain it, many of us know that it is practically so.  
So also we have a hope, most sure and steadfast, that we ourselves shall, like our Representative, enter into Heaven. But for all that we have a daily fear lest we should seem to come short of it! We know that “there remains a rest to the people of God,” and we are persuaded that we belong to that happy company. Yet we keep under our body and bring it into subjection, lest that, by any means, after having preached to others, we ourselves should become castaways. If you ask, “How can a man feel these two things?” I answer—he does feel them and if he is born of God, and God delights in him—he feels them pretty much with equal force. As two battledores keep up the shuttlecock, so often I believe a man is kept in his right place by the action of these two contrary forces as they seem to be. As the earth goes round the sun, keeping in its orbit, it is under two influences—the centrifugal that would drive it off at a tangent and the centripetal that would pull it into the sun at once—but between the two, it keeps its proper course, and so does the Christian. Oh, that the centripetal force might speedily conquer the centrifugal, that we might fly unto our God and be forever with Him rejoicing in the fullness of eternal happiness!  
I hope, Brothers and Sisters, that we who believe have a hope of perfection. In some senses, we have it already, for we are complete in Christ Jesus and accepted in the Beloved. But even that blessed assurance is attended with a measure of fear. We are mourning our transgressions, our defects and our shortcomings. We are not what we ought to be, we are not what we wish to be, we are not what we shall be—and while we grasp the, “shall be,” with the hand of faith, we sigh to think that as yet we have realized so little of its blessedness! Brothers and Sisters, may God grant to us hope whenever we have fear, and fear whenever we have hope. May we have hope in God’s power to deliver us when we are under the fear of any trial or danger! May we have hope in God’s Providence to arrange for us whenever we are poor, or sick, or in any straits or difficulties! When we have any fear of God’s wrath, let us have hope in His pity, and whenever we are doubting or troubled, let us have hope in God’s promises which cannot fail, but, in due season, shall surely be fulfilled.  
This fear, mingled with hope, is, I believe, to be the contexture of our religious life. I know that it is of mine with regard to the world at large and the Church at large. I have a daily fear and trembling for the state of the Church of this present time. If anybody asks the watchman what he sees, I answer that I see no morning coming, but deeper darkness constantly falling upon us. Yet even that fear is mixed with hope, for I am certain that God’s Truth will, in the end, win the day. It does not matter which way the current of modern thought may happen to run, the Truth of God will come to the front, by-and-by. Puritan Divines are at a great discount today, but I believe that some of us will live to see them prized more than they ever were! The Doctrines of Grace are, for a while, trod in the mire, but after infidelity has emptied the chapels, and the churches have lost the true missionary spirit, they will come back again to the grand old Truths of the Gospel, and we who are spared shall see a revival of them such as our hearts have longed for! Whatever we fear for Zion in her travail, we have hope in the birth that shall come of it by God’s good Grace!  
This same principle ought, I think, to be applied to our ordinary daily life. We hope in God’s mercy whenever we are in trouble, but we fear whenever we are prosperous. If we are in health, then we fear, for we may be struck down in a moment. If we are sick, then we hope, for we may be raised up just as quickly. If we are in adversity, then we hope, for the longest tide turns, at last. When we are prospering, then we fear and tremble for all the goodness that God causes to pass before us. I, for one, must say that I usually feel confident and joyous whenever I am in trouble. But whenever I have a grand day of success, I go home sinking into my shoes, for I am always afraid that something evil will follow!  
It is with that blended hope and fear that we come to God in prayer— trembling to take upon ourselves to speak to Him, for we are but dust and ashes—yet coming with holy boldness to the Throne of the heavenly Grace. In this way, also, we go to our service for our Lord. Luther said that, often, when he went to preach, his knees knocked together for fear. But when he was preaching, he had such hope in God’s mercy that he was like a lion! That is the way we expect to die. We will go to our dying bed and gather up our feet with fear, for we are men—but also with hope, for we are men of God—fearing the Lord, but hoping in His mercy!  
III. I have not time to preach upon the blessings implied in this Divine favor, so I will give you only an outline of them.  
When God takes pleasure in any man, the outcome of His favor may be learned from the pleasure which we take in our own child. For instance, when any mother takes pleasure in her child, she likes to think of her child, she likes to look at her child, she likes to speak to her child, she likes to minister to her child. She loves her child’s prattling talk, its little broken syllables are all music to her ears. She takes pleasure in all that her child is, in all it does, in all it is to be. It is altogether a delight to her. Now, without enlarging upon this point, I will say that if you fear the Lord and hope in His mercy, God takes as much delight in you as you do in your dear child—and far more, because God’s is an infinite mind and from it there comes infinite delight, so that He views you with infinite complacency!  
Can you believe it? You do not view yourself so—I hope that you do not, but God sees you in Christ. He sees that in you that is yet to be in you! He sees in you that which will make you grow into a heavenly being and, therefore, He takes delight in you. It does not matter what others think of you. I want you to go home and feel, “If my Heavenly Father takes delight in me, it really does not concern me if my fellow creatures do not understand or appreciate me.” If you and I want to be pleased by other people’s good opinion, we shall lay ourselves open to be wounded by other people’s bad opinion. Live so as to please God and if your fellows are not pleased, well then, they must be displeased. It should be the one aim of your life to be able to say, “I do always those things which please Him.” Walk with God by faith, as Enoch did, that you may have a like testimony to his, “he pleased God.” And if you have pleased God, what matters it who is not pleased? Therefore, let us rejoice and be glad, and praise the name of the Lord, for He “takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy.”  
I trust that there is some poor sinner who can squeeze into the Kingdom of God through that description. “I fear Him,” says one, “I have a feeble hope in His mercy.” God bless you, dear Friend! He takes pleasure in you. If you are but consciously guilty of sin and, therefore, fear—and if you are but believingly looking to Christ, alone, and, therefore hope, then you are His, and His forever! The Lord bless you, for Christ’s sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: *PSALM 147.*

This Book of Psalms ends its golden stream in a cataract of praise. The last Psalms are Hallelujah Psalms. This one begins and ends, as several others do, with “Hallelujah.”

Verse 1. Praise you the LORD: for it is good to sing praises unto our God. He is, “our God,” whether He is the God of other men or not. He is “our God” by His choice of us, and by our choice of Him—“our God” by eternal Covenant, to whom we also pledge ourselves

 “This God is our God forever and ever: He will be our Guide even unto death.” Then let us “sing praises unto our God,” for, “it is good” so to do.

1. For it is pleasant; and praise is comely. It is the most pleasurable of all exercises! It is the occupation of Heaven. “It is pleasant.” It is delightful to the heart. Nothing tends to lift us out of sorrow and trouble like giving ourselves to singing the high praises of God. “It is good.” “It is pleasant.” “It is comely.” It is becoming, fitting, beautiful. Praise and Jehovah should go together. He is so worthy to be praised that to withhold His praises would be an uncomely thing! But to adore Him, to magnify Him, is the very beauty of holiness.

2. The LORD does build up Jerusalem: He gathers together the outcasts of Israel. There is the first reason for praise. The Jews were pleased to behold their city rising out of the heap of ruins. They were glad to see the scattered ones, the outcasts, coming back to their native place and entering into citizenship in Zion. Shall not the Church of God, of which Jerusalem was a type, praise God that He is steadily and solidly building up a Church to His praise and Glory? He is building it out of strange materials—outcast sinners who were far from Him by wicked works are brought near by the blood of Christ! Stones from Nature’s quarry are changed into living stones and then built up into a living Temple for His praise. “Jehovah does build up Jerusalem.” Not the minister, not the workers in the Church, but the Lord Himself does it! “He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.” An uplifted Christ draws all men to Him! The gathering power is with Him. “Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.” Let us praise God that this takes place, in a measure, in our midst, and in other Churches where His name is honored.

3. He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds. He is such a condescending God that He walks the hospitals and is familiar with despondency—and enters in sympathy into the cases of distress which others shun because they are unable to help. Where He comes as the Good Physician, “He heals the broken in heart.”

4. He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by their names. I call your attention, dear Friends, to the wonderful change from the sick to the stars—from the broken in heart to the starry hosts of Heaven! Our God is equally at home with the little and with the great—with stars, which to us are countless—and with men, who to us are comfortless. God is just as great in dealing with our sorrows as in guiding the stars in their courses! He is as great as He is good, and as good as He is great!

5. Great is our Lord, and of great power: His understanding is infinite. There are three things here predicated of Him—first, that He is great in Himself, great in the vastness of His Being. Next, that He is of great power and, then, that He is of great, yes, of infinite understanding. Here is the mercy of it all, that He brings that greatness, that vastness of power, that infinity of knowledge to bear upon poor broken hearts—that He is just as wise in meeting our distresses as He is in marshalling the stars that He has made. Oh, what a God is ours!

6. The LORD lifts up the meek; He casts the wicked down to the ground. Ours is an amazing God. There is none like He. He is undoing all the things that are, turning things upside down. The lowly, He lifts up, but the proud, He throws down to the ground, even into the dust. This is His way and this is always a special note in the songs of God’s people. Remember how Mary sang, “He has put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. He has filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He has sent empty away”? This singular behavior of our God, who has no respect unto the persons of men, is a special cause for our thankfulness. Therefore, let us magnify His name!

7. Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God. Let every form of melody and harmony be consecrated to Him. Give Him thanksgiving and thanks-living. And as He is always giving to you, take care that you give to Him what you can—namely, your thanks.

8, 9. Who covers the Heaven with clouds, who prepares rain for the earth, who makes grass to grow upon the mountains. He gives to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry. God, the Infinite One, makes the clouds—not the laws of Nature, which are dead, inoperative things without Him! But Jehovah Himself fashions the clouds and prepares the rain. There is an Infinite Wisdom about the preparation of every raindrop and the sending of it in such form and way that it shall be balanced upon each blade of grass and shall hang there glittering in its perfection, and nourish even the least herb of the field. Only Infinite Wisdom could have thought of or prepared a single shower of rain! This rain is for the grass—does God think of the grass? Yes, not only of the cedars of Lebanon, but of grass, and not only of the grass that grows in the fruitful meadow, but of those little tufts which are, here and there, upon the rugged mountains! He thinks of clouds, of rain and of grass which He makes to grow upon the mountains, that He may feed cattle. Does God, the high and lofty One, stoop to give to the beast His food? Ah, and more than that! He feeds all those wild birds that seem of no use to men—even the young ravens which clamor for the parent bird to return and fill them when they are hungry. Does God turn feeder of ravens? Ah, so it is. Then, again, blessed be His name! Praise you the Lord, for it is good to sing praises to such a condescending God as this! I am sure that you can draw the inferences for your own comfort. Do you seem like a little bit of grass on the bare mountainside? He has clouds and rain for you! Do you seem like a neglected bird in its nest, crying for food? He who feeds the ravens will feed you! The Hebrew has it, “the sons of the ravens,” and if God gives food to the sons of the ravens, He will certainly feed His own sons!

10, 11. He delights not in the strength of the horse. He takes no pleasure in the legs of a man. The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy. Again, you see, it is the same strain. It is not the great things or the mighty things that attract Him, but the little things, and the weak things, and the despised things.

12, 13. Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise your God, O Zion. For He has strengthened the bars of your gates; He has blessed your children within you. There shall be special hallelujahs from God’s own people. His holy city and His holy hill should magnify the thrice-holy God. O Beloved, if we are, indeed, children of that Jerusalem which is from above, which is the mother of all Believers, let us prepare a new song to the Lord our God for all His mercy to us! Praise Him in your own houses, in “Jerusalem.” Praise Him in His own house, in “Zion.” Let your praise thus be continuous, where you dwell and where He dwells! “He has strengthened the bars of your gates.” The fortifications are finished and He has made all secure. Therefore, magnify His name.

14. He makes peace in your borders, and fills you with the finest of the wheat. When the Church is peaceful and when the Gospel fills the saints—and they feed upon it and feel it to be the very finest of the wheat—should not God be praised? Does not the hallelujah come in here, again? Praise you the Lord for spiritual meat, and spiritual peace, and spiritual security!

15. He sends forth His commandment upon earth: His Word runs very swiftly. Oriental kings made a point of having swift postal arrangements by which they could send their decrees to the extremity of their dominions, sometimes on horses, and sometimes on swift camels. But God’s command, God’s decree, God’s “Word runs very swiftly.” He dwells in the midst of His people and He sends forth from Zion His decree. He dispatches His couriers and they run very swiftly to work His will. It is so in Providence—it is assuredly so in Grace! As to Providence, see what God does—

16. He gives snow like wool. People say, nowadays, “It snows.” They said among the Hebrews, “HE gives snow.” There seems to be a tendency to get further and further away from God in these very learned days. If this is all that science can do for us—put God further off—it shall be our injury rather than our blessing! “He gives snow like wool.” The flakes are like the fleece and fall softly. Snow clothes the earth with a white, warm garment, as the well-washed sheep are clothed with wool.

16. He scatters the hoarfrost like ashes. There are black frosts and white frosts—and you know how, sometimes, vegetation appears to be burnt up with cold. It is God who does it all—

*“He scatters the hoarfrost like ashes.”*

17. He casts forth His ice like morsels. The hailstones come like morsels—like crumbs, that is the word—like crumbs of ice, or, as the ice is formed upon the lake, it comes like crusts. Either way, “He casts forth His ice like morsels.”

17. Who can stand before His cold? If God displays Himself as fire, who can stand against His flames? Or if He chooses to display Himself in cold, there is as much of consuming force about intense cold as about vehement heat! “Who can stand before His cold?”

18. He sends out His Word, and melts them. The icebergs float southward and are melted. The rivers that had been held in chains of ice leap into liberty and all at the Word of the Lord—“He sends out His word, and melts them.”

18. He causes His wind to blow and the waters flow. “This is the result of the laws of nature.” So say those who are still in nature’s darkness! “This is the work of God,” say those who have come out of that darkness into His marvelous light!

19. He shows His word to Jacob. Observe that when God’s people know God’s Word, it is as much the work of God as when the waters are loosed from their bands of ice!

19. His statutes and His judgments to Israel. The Lord does it according to His own Sovereign will.

20. He has not dealt so with any nation: and as for His judgments, they have not known them. Praise you the LORD. Here, you see again, is a peculiar reason for thanksgiving! “Praise you Jehovah.” “It is good to sing praises unto our God, for He has dealt with us in a special manner, with peculiar and discriminating Grace. ‘He has not dealt so with any nation; and as for His judgments, they have not known them.’” Therefore are they silent, but let us not be dumb. With such a Revelation as we have, with such teachings of His Spirit to make the Lord known to us, let us not be ungrateful, but always praise His name!

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PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST. Sermon #314 The New Park Street Pulpit 1

PEACE AT HOME AND PROSPERITY ABROAD  
NO. 314

**DELIVERED ON WEDNESDAY EVENING, MAY 9, 1860, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE TABERNACLE, MOORFIELDS, ON BEHALF OF THE LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

**“He makes peace in your borders and fills you with the finest of the wheat. He sends forth His commandment upon earth: His word runs very swiftly.”  
Psalm 147:14-15.**

PARDON me, my Brethren, if I attempt no exposition whatever of the text, but simply endeavor to address you upon what I think is an inference from it, or at least a reflection to which it might readily give rise. The Psalmist is here describing the prosperity of Jerusalem and he connects that prosperity with the progress and diffusion of the Word of God. He is teaching us, I think, this great Truth of God, that there is an intimate connection between the establishment and the building of our Zion at home and the going forth and the spread of God’s Word abroad. Both in the provinces of our own land and throughout the regions of the world. Our own Churches must be in a prosperous state.

As the second verse has it—“the Lord does build up Jerusalem.” We may then rest assured that “He will gather together the outcasts of Israel.” If there is in the Churches of our own highly-favored land a healthiness of spirit and an abundance of the grace of God, we need not fear but that all our operations will be carried on with success. God shall greatly crown our endeavors and give us to see our heart’s desire. If this is not precisely the critical meaning of the text, then let me just say I shall use it in this sense as a motto. The subject of this evening’s discourse will be the connection between a healthy Church at home and the increase of the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

First, let me very briefly advert to the main points which constitute a healthy state in the Church of Christ. Under what conditions should we be warranted in applying to it the glowing description of this Psalm—“He has blessed your children within you. He makes peace in your borders and fills you with the finest of wheat.” When we have described this healthiness, we shall proceed to show the connection between this and the sending forth of God’s commandment upon earth—the running swiftly of His Word. And then we shall conclude by pushing this principle home to the necessary inference.

I. First, then, WHAT ARE THE POINTS WHICH CONSTITUTE THE HEALTHINESS OF THE CHURCH AT HOME?

To begin with the most important—the true piety of all her members. A Church can never be in a sound and satisfactory state for labor—she never can be in such a condition that God can smile upon her complacently—if she is mixed up with the world, if her sons and daughters are not sufficiently distinguished from the world to be manifestly God’s people. If we take into our Churches those who are not converted, we swell our numbers, but we diminish our real strength. We might need to purchase a larger roll-book, we might, perhaps, be able to parade our numbers before the world and we might even flatter ourselves with our apparent prosperity till we intoxicated our own brain—but we should be going backward when we think we are going forward.

We have not conquered the world. We have only yielded to it. We have not brought the world up to us, we have only brought ourselves down to it. We have not Christianized an ungodly generation, but we have adulterated Christianity. We have brought the chaste spouse of Christ to commit fornication among the people. We cannot possibly be too strict in the examination of those who are proposed for Church fellowship. I will grant you, there are methods by which bigotry may exclude a large proportion of those whom God has called, putting such an extent of knowledge as the test of Christian experience, that many of the lambs of the flock stand bleating without the fold and are never enabled to come and partake of its pasturage.

This evil, doubtless, is to be avoided. But on the other hand it is quite possible that the fullest charity with which the mildness of our Savior’s mind and the love of the Spirit can imbue us, may be blended with the most stern firmness in executing a sacred trust and with the most prudent discretion in maintaining the purity of discipleship when we are engaged in the acceptance or rejection of candidates for the fellowship of the visible Church. If we could tomorrow bring into the Church a sufficient number  
of ungodly but moral men to double our numbers, to double our subscriptions, to double our places of worship, to enable us to double the number of our missionaries, we should, by succumbing to the temptation, procure a curse instead of a blessing.

In our purity, and in our purity, alone, we stand. Let us once lose our distinctive principles—let us once come back and attempt to nationalize the Church and bring ourselves from the distinction we have sought to maintain between the Church and the world—and God’s blessing will be withdrawn from us. We shall cease to be strong within and mighty without.

Oh, that God might grant to each of us, who are the pastors of His Church, that unceasing vigilance and constant watchfulness whereby we shall be able to detect the wolves in sheep’s clothing! That He would give us grace whereby we would be able to say calmly, sternly, yet lovingly—to those who come before us seeking communion without satisfactory evidence that they belong to the living family of God—“You must go your way until the Spirit of God has touched your heart, for until you have received the living faith in Jesus, we cannot receive you into the number of His faithful ones.”

Next to the sincere piety of all our Church members, I think we must look very carefully and very steadfastly to the soundness of that Gospel which we proclaim and preach. Soundness I say—and here, possibly, I may be touching upon a delicate subject—but that subject is of the utmost and highest importance! There should be, I aver, in the declaration of the ministers of Christ, not uniformity—for that is not consistent with life—but unity which is not only consistent with life, but which is one of the highest marks of a healthy existence.

I do not think the time will ever come when we shall all of us see eye to eye and shall all use the same terms and phrases in setting forth doctrinal truths. I do not imagine there ever will be a period, unless it should be in the millennium, when every Brother will be able to subscribe to every other Brother’s creed, when we shall be identical in our apprehensions, experiences and expositions of the Gospel in the fullest sense of the word. But I do maintain there should be, and there must be, if our Churches are to be healthy and sound, a constant adherence to the fundamental doctrines of the Divine Truths of God.

I should be prepared to go a very long way for charity’s sake and admit that very much of the discussion which has existed even between Arminians and Calvinists has not been a discussion about vital truth, but about the terms in which that vital truth shall be stated. When I have read the conflict between that mighty man who made these walls echo with his voice, Mr. Whitfield, and that other mighty man equally useful in his day, Mr. Wesley, I have felt that they contended for the same Truths of God and that the vitality of godliness was not mainly at issue in the controversy.

But, my Brethren, if it should ever come to be a matter which casts doubts upon the divinity of Christ, or the personality of the Holy Spirit—if it should come to a matter of using Gospel terms in a sense the most contrary to that which has ever been attached to them in any age of the truth—if it should ever come to the marring and spoiling of our ideas of Divine justice and of that great atonement which is the basis of the whole Gospel, as they have been delivered to us—then it is time, my Brethren, once and for all that the scabbard be thrown aside, that the sword be drawn.

Against any who assails those precious vital Truths of God which constitute the heart of our holy religion, we must contend even to the death. It is not possible that an affirmative and negative can be two views of the same Truth of God. We are continually told when one man contradicts another, that he does but see with other eyes. No, my Brethren, the one man is blind, he does not see at all, the other sees, having the eyes of his understanding enlightened.

There may be two views of the Truth of God, but two views of Truth cannot be directly antagonistic. One must be the true view and the other the false view. No stretch of my imagination can ever allow me to antici

pate the time can come when “yes” and “no” can lie comfortably down in the same bed. I cannot conceive by any means there ever can be a matrimonial alliance between positive and negative. Do you think such things might exist? Verily there were giants at one time, when the sons of God saw the daughters of men. And we may live to see gigantic heresies, when God’s own children may look upon the fair daughters of philosophy and monster delusions shall stalk across the earth.

A want of union about the Truth of God too clearly proves that the body of the Church is not in a healthy state. No man’s system can be said to be in a normal condition if that man prefers ashes to bread and prefers ditch water to that which flows from the bubbling fountain. A man must be unhealthy or he would not use such garbage. We must look to the preservation of the health of the Church. Alas, if her doctrines are tainted, her faith will not be maintained and the Church will become unsound. Who can tell what next may occur?

But not to tarry here, it seems to me the next important point with regard to the true healthiness of the Church at home will be more and more of the spirit of union. This Society happily represents in a large degree this saved bond of brotherhood. It may have become somewhat denominational—it was never intended to be. Nor is it the fault of the maintainers— it is not because they have made it exclusive—but because other denominations have somewhat seceded and established societies of their own. The London Missionary Society comprehended all Christian men, whether in the Establishment or not. I believe we are all eligible to become members and all may, as far as we can, assist in sending forward the Gospel by its means.

But alas, there lingers among our Churches—and I hope it is but a lingering of that which must presently expire—there lingers still a spirit of disunion because we do not agree in ceremonies. We must have many communions, because we cannot see eye to eye in discipline, while nevertheless, we are really and vitally one. We must have, I suppose, different walks—and cannot commune and converse with one another as members of the same family and as parts of the same Divine body. Whenever the foot is at enmity with the hand, there must be something like madness in the body. There cannot be a sound mind within that frame which is divided against itself.

And if there are among us any remnants of the spirit of division, if there is anything in us that would make us excommunicate and cut off Brethren because we cannot see with them in all the points of the spiritual compass, though we agree in the main—if it is so, then there must be somewhere or other an unhealthy disease—there must be gray hairs here and there, which have stolen upon us though we knew it not. Oh my heart longs to see a more thorough union among the ministers of Christ Jesus.

I think there is more of it than we sometimes believe. I am sure the more we come to know one another, the better we love each other. Distrust may arise from want of personal acquaintance—we need more frequently to come into company. And if the Churches were more active, so as to throw us into contact, I think we should discover more of a real unity than perhaps we think exists. And oh that this unity may grow and continue and may not be merely an evangelical alliance in form, but a spiritual confederation in fact! That its enunciation may come from every lip and every heart and that there may be a real love toward every other member of that alliance in carrying out its principles to the fullest and the greatest extent.

These three points—purity of life, soundness of doctrine and unity of the ministers of the Church of Christ—will help to constitute a healthy Church at home. All these things, however, will never happen unless there is added another, namely, constant activity. We all have our times when we feel dull and listless and heavy—when we would rather be in bed all day than get up—rather sit in the chair than go to business or enter the pulpit. Or when we are in the pulpit, we find our brain does not work and we cannot put forth the energy that we would. The tongue may be as a ready writer, but we cannot speak as we would desire.

We feel at times that we are not well, that there is something wrong in our system. And the Church every now and then gets into the same state. At intervals some earnest speech stirs the members up to spasmodic action, then they return again to their apathy and Laodicean lukewarmness. Sometimes they feel as if they would carry all by storm, but later they sit down again in calm security. We have hundreds of our Churches, from which I continually receive an answer like this to the enquiry, “How do you prosper?”—“Well, we are not increasing much, we have added no souls to the Church, but we are very comfortable.”

That very comfortableness has stolen upon a large proportion of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a marvel that they should be comfortable while souls are dying and sinners perishing—when Hell is filling and the kingdom of Christ is not extending—yet quite comfortable they are. And they come to look upon the revivals and increase to the Church as wonders and prodigies, rather like comets that come now and then, than like sums which are to abide with us. And they grow into the habit of questioning the revival spirit and thinking that when the Church is alive, she has become excited, that she has been dram drinking and is intoxicated.

When she is in health she is at work without her hands, praying with all her tongues, weeping with all her eyes and agonizing with God in prayer with all the might of her many intercessors. Oh, my Brethren, we are all wrong when we think that the Church is healthy when it is comfortable and still. Is the health of the stagnant pool, the health of the graveyard, the health of a fainting fit—a fit that is on the very verge of death—healthy? God be pleased to let loose some blood from us, that we may discover what the Church really is when she shall put forth all her energy. If we saw a queen sitting upon a heap of rubbish, her hair disheveled and dirt upon her garments, if she never stirs hand or foot, but sits

down sleeping on in her misery, could you think she is a queen in all her dignity?

Rise up Virgin Daughter of Zion and let us behold you in your beauty. Shake yourself from the dust and put on your beautiful garments and ascend to your throne—then shall men see what you are. When you are idle and careless and prayerless, you are sick and ready to die. But when you are anxious and striving and travailing, then are you in the state in which your Lord would have you—you bless Him and He has blessed you.

One more point and I will conclude this description of the Church’s healthiness. The Church is never healthy except when she abounds in prayer. I have known Prayer Meetings that have been like the bells to the parish steeple—a very poor parish where there were never enough bells to ring a chime. The minister has had to pray twice and read a long chapter in order to spin out the time. Or to meet the want yet more efficiently, he has caned upon a brother who had the gift of supplicating for twenty-five minutes and then concluded by asking pardon for his short-comings.

And then the few friends, the bold-hearted, self-denying martyrs, who went to hear the Word of God, were obliged to endure the torture of hearing such a prayer as that. Those Brethren come and go and never feel that God has been in their midst—that they have never been near to the Throne of God, never had the wrestling with the angel, never brought a blessing down—for the man has been praying against time, “an occupying of the few minutes,” as they call it, and there was no real intercession or drawing near to God.

Now, what Church can be considered to be as Christ would have her, when her members meet to pray and they constitute but a handful? I care not if the place is crowded at your other services, the Church is not prosperous if the Prayer Meetings are thin. It signifies nothing if that Church has sent up a hundred, or five hundred, or a thousand pounds to the Missionary Society—write “Ichabod” on her walls, unless the Brethren meet together for prayer. The most erudite minister may instruct the people. The most earnest preacher may plead God’s cause with men—but if he has not with him a band of men who plead man’s cause with God—his pleadings will be in vain.

Shut up that house in which men have ceased to pray. Or if you open it, let your opening be a meeting for hearty and earnest prayer. I have to mourn and confess in my own case, that I have had to feel in myself—and I think I can speak for many others—a want of prayerfulness with regard to missionary effort especially. These things do not meet us as the destitution of London does. For the City Missionaries and for the sinners of our own congregations, I trust we do not need arguments to make us pray. These arguments are before us every day. We do pray for our own families and our own congregations, but the heathens are across the sea, many miles away.

We may now and then see a Mohammedan in the street, or the dark face of a Hindu, and then our soul breathes a silent ejaculation. But alas, for the most part, many Christians might say whole months pass with them without carrying the cause of the heathen, who are in darkness, before the Throne of God. And how can we expect, while this unhealthiness exists among us, that God will bless our missionary operations? Zion must avail before she can bring forth children. She may use all her weapons but if she keeps back the great battering-ram of prayer, she will never break the walls of the spiritual Jericho. She may use every other instrument, but unless she takes John Bunyan’s weapon of “all-prayer,” she will never put to rout the great enemy of souls.

Yes, my Brethren, we want faithfulness, we want healthiness, we want a prayerful spirit given to us—then we may conclude that all is well with us. It shall be left to each individual heart and each member of the Church to answer for himself whether his own Church is in a state of spiritual health, taking these things as a test, namely—purity, soundness, unity, and prayerfulness.

II. I have now to show THE CONNECTION BETWEEN A HEALTHY CHURCH AT HOME AND THE SPREAD OF CHRIST’S KINGDOM ABROAD.

To the mind of the simple this thing will be clear enough. Suppose all the Churches to degenerate into a lack of life and into nearness to spiritual death. Suppose the pulpit in our land gives an uncertain sound. As a result, God’s people begin to forsake the assembling of themselves together, no crowds gather to hear the Word—places begin to get empty. Prayer Meetings become more and more deserted. The efforts of the Church may be still carried on, but they are merely a matter of routine. There is no life, no heart in it.

I am supposing a case, you see, a case which I trust we never may see. Things get worse and worse. The doctrines of the Gospel become expunged and unknown. They that fear the Lord no more speak one to another. Still for a little time the money continues to be brought into the Society and foreign missions are sustained. Can you not imagine reading in the next report, “We have had no converts this year. Our income is still maintained. But notwithstanding that, our Brethren feel that they are laboring under the greatest possible disadvantages. In fact, some of them wish to return home and renounce the work” ?

Another year—the missionary spirit has grown cold in the Churches, its funds decrease. Another year and yet another—it becomes a moot point among us as to whether missions are necessary or not. We have come at last to the more advanced point which some have already reached and begin to question whether Mahomet and Confucius had not a revelation from God as well as Jesus Christ. And now we begin to say, “Is it needful that we should extend the Gospel abroad at all? We have lost faith in it. We see it does nothing at home—shall we send that across the sea—that which is a drug on the market here? Shall we send and distribute as a healing for the wounds of the daughters of Sidon and of Tyre, that which has not healed the daughters of Jerusalem?”  
I can conceive that first one station, then another, would be given up.

Those that would be maintained would only be kept up by reason of an old custom which was recollected to have existed in the absurd days of Evangelists. I can imagine the Church degenerating further and further and further, till at last her unhealthiness clearly showed that it would be impossible that it ever could be maintained abroad. You have only to look abroad upon nature and you will soon find analogies to this. There is a well of water springing up and the people of the district flock to it, it is said to have healthy properties. Men come and some are refreshed. Suddenly the secret spring begins to fail. By some means or other the water is removed to another place and the spring is no more there.

You can conceive that this place would cease to be a thoroughfare— there would no longer be visitors. Where multitudes of men and women were accustomed to drink with joy and gladness, there is not a single person to be seen. Or, suppose again there is the sun in its sphere shedding light on all the planets and with its attractive power making them move with regularity in their orbits Suddenly the sun’s fire dies out—its attractive power decreases also and becomes extinguished. Can you not imagine that the result must be fatal to all the planets that revolve around it? How shall they be sustained in their light and heat, or how shall they be kept in their spheres when once the power that kept them there is gone? Prophecy is fulfilled. The sun is turned into darkness and the moon into blood and the stars fall like withered fig-leaves from the tree.

And what is the Church to our missionary stations but like the sun? Is it not her light that shines? Do they not receive from her their instructions in the Word of God—the light of the world? And are not those stations the rays from the great central luminary? Let her lose her power and her light and what must become of the rest of the world? Must not total blank darkness cover all the nations? Oh, yes, my Brethren, if we do not know that, we soon should know it if God should ever put us to the test. If once England’s glory were extinguished, if once the Christianity of America were put out, where were all vital godliness then? How should those agencies which depend upon us be sustained if our home piety were once brought to nothing? No. We must have the bars of our gates strengthened, there must be peace in our borders and we must be filled with the finest wheat, or else God s Word will not run very quickly, nor will His Commandments be sent far upon the earth.

Let me endeavor very briefly to shows what this connection is. There is a direct connection between the purity of the Church at hone and the progress of Christianity abroad—a direct connection. We shall have to speak of the more indirect connection by-and-by. The inconsistencies of English Christians have proved one of the greatest barriers to the progress of Christ’s kingdom in other lands. An excellent minister of the Church in France told me—and told it with a sorrowful earnestness, too—that Protestantism received a severe check in Paris from the inconsistent conduct of English Christian men there—those who claim Protestantism at least— if they were not members of our Churches.

“Now Sir,” said he, “when a man visits Paris, who is a Protestant—an English Protestant—I will not say an actual member of your Church certainly—when he comes to Paris, he neglects all attendance to the Sabbath Day.” And Romanists, if spoken to about their constant breach of the Holy Day, will reply to the Reformed Christians of France, “Look to the Protestants of Great Britain when they are here—do they attend to their religion abroad any better than we do?”

I have been assured by several pastors living in Paris that it is a frightful and lamentable fact that men, when they go on the Continent, seem to go there to get rid of their religion. When they land on those shores they assume the garb of a traveler and think they may be permitted to attend Roman Catholic places of worship on the Lord’s Day! They are not seen worshipping God with their Brethren where the worship in the English language is still maintained. I can assure you that I was affectionately requested to avail myself of an early opportunity to make a prominent complaint against the Christianity of England for its inconsistency abroad.

In the name of the pastors of France I speak, and in the name of the pastors of L’Oratoire I think I speak also—I think I speak for five of them at least—I do beseech Christian men who are going abroad not to permit themselves to forget their Christianity, but to remember that the eyes of men are still upon them and if not the eyes of men certainly the eyes of God.

Let me give you another fact which proves that when the Church is unsound at home she will not go on well abroad. In the late Report of the Baptist Missionary Society I observed a great trouble through which certain stations have lately passed. A trouble which they have survived, but which materially checked their usefulness. Certain Brethren holding rather extreme Church views thought it necessary, instead of carrying on operations among the pure heathen, to set to work to convert those who were Christians already to their own creed. The effect in the villages where they tried their scheme was that by giving more charity than a poorer society could afford to give, they managed to decoy a large proportion of the congregations to a different form of Protestant service.

The result was just this—they were informed by these pastors—good men doubtless—that the sect to which they once belonged was an ignoble body in its own country and did not possess any influence. And for the first time the Hindus answered that there were Christian men who could depreciate one another—that there were professors of this one religion who had a greater dislike to one another than any two sects of Heathenism ever had. The effect upon the minds of the villagers was not merely disastrous to that one mission, but to Christianity herself. They began to suspect that the house that was divided against itself could not have its foundations upon the Truth of God.

My Brethren, when we shall once come to unity of doctrine and to purity and consistency of life, the direct agency of our Church members and of our missionaries upon the heathen world will be far more healthy and effective than it is. I do not doubt, if I had a wider and more extensive

knowledge of the proceedings of the Church in other lands, I could multiply instances of this kind, in which our faults at home have been very great drawbacks upon our success abroad.

And yet the Agency, I think, may be considered in the main to be indirect—but nevertheless, as potent as if it were direct. If our Churches are not true, if they are not kept by God, if they are not pure and holy and prayerful, they will begin to lose the missionary spirit and when the missionary spirit evaporates, of what use will be the missionary body? Bury it. Yes, in Bloomfield Street will we dig its grave. Or in Moorgate Street shall we make a vault! Put on its shroud and let it have a tearful burial, for if the spirit of missions is lost in the Churches, it would be no use trying to maintain the semblance of the body of the Society.

We all know what the missionary spirit is and yet we could not any of us exactly describe it. It is a sort of thing that sets a man longing to see others saved and makes him pant especially for those who have no means of Grace in their own lands. It is that they may have those means carried to them—that they may be saved. This leads them to self-denying and to earnest prayer for those that are diligent servants. Extinguish the healthiness of the Church and you have lost that spirit. We can never expect the ruddy flush of health upon the cheek, unless there is health within.

The missionary spirit is just that bloom which will soon be taken away as if consumption should seize upon the frame. The missionary spirit can only be maintained by the maintenance of life and vitality in the Church. But further, if you take away the missionary spirit—all prayerfulness and that all powerfulness to rend the clouds of Heaven are withdrawn. Let the winds of the Holy Spirit, Brethren, once depart from our Churches at home, our Missionary Society shall be as a ship at sea with her sails all spread and her spars well rigged—but without a breath of air to move her towards her port. There she shall lie till she perishes upon the rocks, or founders in a calm. She can be of no service. She can bring no glory to her God—carry no cargo of living spirits up to the port of Heaven, unless there is prayer at home to wake up all the winds and let them loose upon her to speed her on her destined course.

With that want of prayer, too, you must remember you suspend all hopes of finding fresh missionaries. I have often wondered whether our Churches are choosing the best means to find out young men who would be useful in the mission field. There is growing nowadays a lack of ministers for our own pulpits. Why it is so I cannot tell, except that it strikes me that young men are not sufficiently encouraged when they have preaching abilities, to endeavor to do their best to exercise them. I do know a brother who always makes it a rule if a young man displays any sort of ability and applies to him for a recommendation for College or otherwise—positively to throttle him if he can. “You,” he says. “Who are you? I am sure you will never make a minister, you can only talk, Sir—you are no good.”

And many a young man who might have been usefully employed in that one Church has been driven away from it to seek some more congenial spirit because he has been put back in his attempts to do some service. Of course if we never make an attempt to grow ministers, or to bring them out from the world, train—them up and guide them to the place where their talents may be proved—we shall not have a right to expect God’s blessing in this matter. Only cease to cultivate wheat and you shall have but very little of it. God does raise men and send them out. But at times He works by means. And He makes the Church use means to bring out members.

The old Church of the Waldenses used the best means I think that ever will be devised. Every pastor of the Church had one young man with him and tried to train him up, keeping him in habitual conversation with him and teaching him what he knew of pastoral discipline and of the preaching of the Word. So that when the one minister died, they had not to look for a successor—there he was ready to work among the young men who had come out of that Church.

Our nation used to boast that it could grow everything it needed. We do not care for the boast in these free-trade times, but we do say that our Churches ought to grow all that they need for themselves. They ought not always to go a hundred miles to get pastors when they could obtain them among themselves. They do not go abroad for deacons! Why not have pastors from among themselves that were raised from childhood in the Church? Ah, should we once become unsound in our Churches and prayer become cold—where are the men to come from that shall succeed those heroes of Christ whose blood was shed by heathen hands?

Where shall we find the successors to Knuibb and Williams? Where shall we find the successors to Moffat and Livingston, unless the healthy tone of Christian self-denial and holy firmness of Divine fervor be kept up and maintained? Do you imagine you can enlist them from abroad? Do you think they will spring up at your call? Oh, no. It is one thing to obtain money to keep a man, to obtain a free passage for him and a station where he may be maintained—but another thing to find your man. And you may lose your men because you are not looking for them. You may pass over the men whom God would honor most, because they come not up to your standard of scholastic attainments or oratorical gift.

They might come up to that by-and-by. Your striving together with prayer, with sympathy and interest in their welfare—God may enrich them. And then you might find a phalanx of heroes who should be like the old guard who never could surrender—but in every battle upon which they should enter would drive their foemen before them—even to the ends of the earth.

III. The last point is one upon which I would briefly but very earnestly preach to myself and to all here assembled. If it is true and I am sure it is, that the healthiness of the Church at home is vitally connected with the success of the Word of God as preached abroad, then, dear Brothers and

Sisters, let us remember that it must have also a connection with our own personal standing in the sight of God. Truth is like the crystal which retains its shape even though it be broken almost to an invisible atom. And so the truth that our success depends upon the whole Church is equally sure—when we bring it down to this—that our success in a measure depends upon the vitality, healthiness and Godliness of each individual.

If you were as a Christian, my Brothers and Sisters, a separate and distinct organism—a body entirely separate from everyone else—you might be terribly sick and no one else would suffer. But you are not so. Remember that you are a member of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. And we hold it to be a precious fact that if one member suffer, all the members suffer. If one member rejoice, all the members share the joy. Must it not equally be true, that if one member be unhealthy, the unhealthiness of that member does to a degree taint the whole? The Church had all things common in the Apostles’ days in temporals. To this day she has all things common in spirituals. We all draw from the same treasury—on the other hand we ought to contribute to the same.

If you contribute less, there is the less in the treasury. If your efforts are more feeble than they should be, the efforts of the whole Church are the feebler. Depend upon it, if there are no temporal unions between man and man, there are such spiritual unions that the thoughts, acts and words of any one man does in a degree—however inappreciable to our senses—affect the deeds and actions of every living man and perhaps of every man that ever shall live to the end of this earthly dispensation. There is no end to a word—it is an infinite thing. It is like the stone that is dropped into the lake—the circles are ever-widening. So your influence for good or evil knows no bounds. It may be but little upon one individual, but then that individual prolongs it upon another and he upon another still, till the pulse of time—no, of eternity—may be made to throb through something that you have said or done.

You may work an evil work which shall tremble in the flames of Hell forever and ever, or you may do a good work, which under God may glisten in the light of glory throughout eternity. There is no limit to the influence of any man and certainly there is no possibility of your staying that influence altogether and of making yourself so distinct that you are independent of another. Look, then, you cold, you careless ones, look on this—you are not clear, you have helped to spoil the Church. Next time you go abroad to find fault, remember that you share in the cause of that fault. Next time you mourn the Church’s prayerlessness, remember that it is your own prayerlessness that helps to make up the bulk of the Church’s lack. Next time you would complain of any minister’s dullness, or of any Church’s want of energy, oh, reflect, it is your own dullness, your own want of energy, that helps to swell the rolling tide.

If every man mended one, all would be mended. If every man had but one soul stirred and that soul his own, the whole Church would be stirred up! If it were possible for every member of the Church to be sound how could any part of the body be sick? If every individual were what he should be, how could there be any complaints? We have grown into the habit of praying for the Church as if she were a colossal culprit, which we should tie up and then take the ten-thronged whip of the Law and pull off strip after strip of the quivering flesh, while all the while the real culprit is escaping, namely—ourselves—our own individual selves. I do feel more and more the necessity of looking at the souls of men in the light of my own responsibility to them.

I do not want to look at the maps sometimes published by the Society, with red and green marks, showing where there is light. I like to look at and have a map where I have been a light. I would rather look at London, not in the light of what any particular society or its agency can do for it, but in the light of what I can do for it. And so each of you ought to look on his fellow man. No society ever thought of taking your responsibility on itself. If it did so—or if you ever thought so—you have been both mistaken. Responsibilities to God for the souls of men is cast on each one of us and no contribution, however liberal, can ever shield us from the obligation. We must stand, each man for himself and hear the, “Well done good and faithful servant,” or else, “You wicked and slothful servant.”

My dear Christian friends—members of our Churches—are you doing all you can for the souls of men? You cannot save them, but God the Holy Spirit can make you the instruments of their salvation. When you hear the bell tolling tomorrow for someone who lived in your street, can you go into the cemetery and can you stand there and look at the grave and say, “I did all that was in the power of any mortal man for that man’s salvation”? No. You cannot. I am afraid that none of us, or but very few, could say, when we hear of the death of friends, “If that man perish, I did not leave a single stone unturned.” No, we might say we have done something, but we could not say that we have done all that we might have done.

And to conclude—that I may discharge this solemn responsibility myself in some measure—are there not many in this congregation who are still unconverted? We talk about heathens—there are heathens here. You have heard the name of Jesus these many years, but you are no more Christian tonight than the Hottentot in his kraal—perhaps further off from the kingdom of Heaven than he, because you have become more hardened in heart by rejecting the Gospel of Christ—a sin he has never committed, seeing he has never known it.

Ah, my Hearers, in this place there have been hundreds of souls brought to Jesus. There is not a pew in this ancient Tabernacle which could not tell stories of grace. If it could but speak, it would say, “Suchand-such a broken-hearted penitent sat there.” These walls, if they could cry aloud, could tell how many sighs and groans they have heard and how many precious tears they have seen trickling from the eyes of converted men and women. And is there not one here tonight who shall yet be saved? Remember, you are lost and ruined—ruined utterly, helplessly and hopelessly—so far as you yourself are concerned, there is no hope of

your salvation.  
But there is help laid on One that is mighty to save—even Jesus Christ.  
Look out of yourself to Him and you are saved. Cast away all selfconfidence and repose on Jesus and your spirit lives. The soul-quickening  
words are, “Believe and live.” Oh, may the Lord enable you now to trust  
Jesus and you shall be saved, be your sins ever so many. The hour which  
sees you look to Christ sees sin’s black garment all unbound and cast  
away. The hour which sees your eye salute the bleeding Savior, sees the

eyes of God looking down on you with manifest complacency and joy. “He that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved,” be his sins  
ever so many. “He that believes not shall be damned,” be his sins ever so  
few. I would earnestly exhort those who feel their need of Jesus, those  
who are “weary and heavy-laden, lost and ruined by the Fall,” now to take  
the Savior, even now, for He is yours. You have a personal right to him, so  
surely as your hearts are willing to receive Him.  
If you have nothing of your own, Christ is yours—take Him—His grace  
is free as the air. Take of this water of life which saves. Drink of it. No one  
can deny you. Drink even to the full—and there shall be joy in Heaven  
and joy on earth over sinners saved.  
May the Lord add His blessing for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

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THE SWIFTLY RUNNING WORD  
NO. 1607

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JULY 3, 1881, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE, METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“His Word runs very swiftly.”  
Psalms 147:15.**

A WORD is the expression of the mind. What a man has thought may live and die within himself, but when he wishes his thought to live in the outer world, he embodies it in a word and thus his thought is made known. Thought without expression is as an arm uplifted, working nothing, though it is the mainspring of action. But according to the ability of the man, his thought is carried out into fact if he is able to speak a powerful word of command. Hence, as the garment of thought and the accomplishment of wish, a word is a very important thing. A word is the manifestation of a man. Dryden says—

*“Speech is the light, the morning of the mind. It spreads the beauteous images abroad,  
Which else lie furled and shrouded in the soul.”*

“Speak,” said the old philosopher, “that I may see you.” More of a man is seen in his words than in anything else belonging to him. You may look into his face and be mistaken. You may visit his house and not discover him. You may scan his business and misunderstand him. But if you hear his daily conversation, you shall soon know him! The heart babbles out its secrets when the tongue is in motion. As the full bucket betrays the water of the well, so is a man discerned by his speech. Thus a word takes a most prominent place in reference to all intelligent beings and this is peculiarly the case with the Lord our God. God’s Word is the manifestation of His secret thought. By it He reveals His decrees. By it He manifests His Nature. By it He carries out His purpose.

“He spoke and it was done; He commanded and it stood fast.” If you wish to know God, you must know His Word. If you wish to perceive His power, you must see how He works by His Word. If you wish to know His purpose before it is actually brought to pass, you can only discover it by His Word. When you watch the events of Providence you are only observing what the Word of God is accomplishing as He sends it forth into the world. As He said to His servant, Ezekiel, so it is—“I am the Lord: I will speak and the Word that I shall speak shall come to pass.”

According to our text, “He sends forth His commandment upon earth: His Word runs very swiftly.” The Word, as it comes from God, takes several forms. At first it came forth as a fiat—“Let it be”—and it was. When there were no angels to hear Him. When matter did not exist to obey Him. When there was nothing but Himself, the Self-Existent One, Jehovah spoke and the things which are, began to be! Since then, He has spoken to His creatures by the word of command, which should always be obeyed even as David said, “I will delight myself in Your statutes: I will not forget Your Word.” The Word of the Lord comes forth in the form of a precept from His Temple or a statute from His Throne and we ought most reverently to treasure up every syllable that God speaks to us in that form, for we are His servants.

He also speaks by way of teaching. He instructs us by revealing Himself through His Word. All true doctrine is the Word of God and is to be devoutly believed. Our prayer should be, “Give me understanding according to Your Word.” His Word is also spoken in the form of promises rich and free and gracious, the Word on which His children live. In this form it is sweeter than honey or the honeycomb. It flashes forth, also, like lightning flames in threats, when God dooms the ungodly or warns them of what shall follow unless they repent.

Terrible, indeed, is the Word by which Justice takes vengeance upon the wicked! But chief of all and above all is THE WORD of whom John speaks—“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God: the same was in the beginning with God.” This is He of whom we read in Revelation, “He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood and His name is called the Word of God.” That Word is the Incarnation of God, wherein God has been pleased to manifest Himself more fully than by all other words or works, for in His Son we see the brightness of the Father’s Glory more than in all else besides, according to His own testimony—“He that has seen Me has seen the Father.” The name of God is written in plain letters in the Person of Jesus, so that even ignorant men may spell it out when their eyes are opened by the Holy Spirit.

The Person, life, death, Resurrection and Glory of our Lord Jesus Christ are the Word which speaks out the heart of God and in His ministry, our Lord set forth the mind of God most fully, even as He said of His disciples, “I have given them Your Word.” To all these forms of God’s Word our text may be appropriately applied, for in each case, “His Word runs very swiftly.” I shall, first, ask you, by the help of God’s Holy Spirit, to learn the lesson of the text. Secondly, let us look to the particular instances which illustrate the truth of the text. And then, thirdly, as the Lord shall help us, let us see what teaching we may individually gather from it for our own cases.

I. First, LET US LEARN THE LESSON OF THE TEXT—“His Word runs very swiftly.” We understand from this sentence, first, that the Word of God, which operated of old, is still operating. “By the Word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water.” But God did not create the world and then leave it, otherwise it had crumbled back into the nothingness from which it came—“the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same Word, kept in store.” Creation is not like a watch which God has made and wound up to go by itself, but every movement of every wheel of the machinery of Nature is dependent upon the constant outgoing of power through the Word of God—for of Him and through Him are all things—and “by Him all things consist.”

Our wise men are continually talking of the laws of Nature and we know that there are such laws, or, in other words, it is a fact that God usually acts in such-and-such a way. But to suppose that there is any power in the mere laws of Nature is absolutely absurd! You may make laws in your household that things are to be done in such-and-such a way, but unless somebody carries them out, laws are nothing. Locomotives obey certain laws of motion, but without steam to drive them the laws of motion will allow them to rust in the engine house! There is a law of gravity, but the force of gravity comes not from the law, but from God. There is a law of growth, but the power by which plants and animals grow is an energy which flows from God.

It may be a fact that force operates in such-and-such a manner, as a stream runs in a certain channel, but, as the channel is not the stream, so the rule of Nature is not the power of Nature. Man lives and all Nature exists by the Word of God, for, “none can keep alive his own soul.” It is of our Lord that we read in the Epistle to the Hebrews, “upholding all things by the Word of His power.” The Word of power with which God made the world is still pulsing through space. When we saw the comet the other evening flaming through the sky, we saw as much of the hand of God as did the angels when, for the first time, they beheld the morning star heralding the dawn! The light of the stars which you and I have seen so many hundreds of times is as much the result of Divine power as if, for the first time, those lamps of Heaven were hung out in the midnight sky.

The planets move in their mighty orbits with a force which is new every moment. The Lord of Hosts orders their marching. The fixed stars abide in their places because the hand which placed them in their sphere preserves them in it! Order is the result of the Lord’s might constantly put forth, otherwise would all things run into a carnival of chaos and dissolve into destruction. As the bubble on the breaker bursts and is gone forever, so would the universe be dissolved at once and lost in nothingness were You not there, O God! His Word still operates and runs swiftly, even as of old. The heavens and the earth would be dissolved were it not that His Word upholds the pillars thereof. Well might they sing of old, “Your, even You, are Lord alone; You have made Heaven, the Heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and You preserve them all; and the host of Heaven worship You.”

Let us go a step further. The Word of God which operated at the first is still operating with the same degree of force. The text says, “His Word runs very swiftly,” that is to say, it keeps its ancient pace. It has not begun to slacken its speed and we know what that was, for, “He rode upon a cherub and did fly, yes He did fly upon the wings of the wind.” There might be a gradual slackening and decline in the forces of Nature if they had been created by God and then set to drift by themselves. But as God is, still, everywhere present, working in the heavens and in the earth and in the seas, in all deep places and as in

 everything—all power continually proceeds from the hand of God—and there is no failure in anything.

Creation may, if God so pleases, wax old as does a garment, but the hand which created it is as full of power as ever. The sun’s light and all else that is necessary for man will continue, according to the Divine appointment, and will never be exhausted while the Lord supplies them. If any natural force fails, it simply means that the Divine power is being withdrawn from that particular form of work. But the Word of power is the same. If science could prove that any force is waning, we should only believe that God is permitting certain created energies to slacken because He means to bring them to their end, having answered His design by them.

Men are always ready to object to the doctrine of the Divine working— “All things continue as they were,” they say one day. And then another day they say, “All things are declining.” Neither declaration is precisely true. There are great changes in the operations of God, but there is no change in the hand that operates! And still, today, as of old, God speaks and it is done! He commands and it stands fast. This world shall abide as long as God pleases—but when the time shall come, He that once spoke to the deeps and they deluged the world—will call to flames of fire and the earth shall be wrapped in them and the works of men that are therein shall be burned up. No palsy has seized upon the eternal arm—the closing scene of the world’s story will be as grand as that with which the chapter of Creation opened!

“He faints not, neither is weary; there is no searching of His understanding.” Yet it is worthy of notice that the Word of God spoken of in the text operates in a silent manner. We are told that He sends out His Word and melts the ice, the frost, the snow. Did you hear that Word of God? You have seen stern Winter yield to the breath of Spring and you believe that the genial change was effected by God’s Word—but did you hear a whisper? No, and none heard it, for the Word of God in Nature is the going forth of His silent will. “No speech, no language; their voice is not heard; yet their line has gone out through all the earth.” Still it is called His Word and I want you to notice that fact because you are apt to think that God in the kingdom of His Grace is dependent upon men’s lips and tongues and words.

I tell you that the Word of God which returns not to Him void is not the word from my tongue, but the Word from His own mind. God can, if He will, speak deep into the human heart without so much as a whisper from the preacher! His Word can enter men’s souls though not a single sound is heard! We have known instances of persons who, when far away from the means of Grace, have, nevertheless, been reached by the still small voice of the Word of God in their spirits, which Word of God, “runs very swiftly.” If God uses tongues and voices, as He generally does, let Him have all the Glory that He is pleased to link His potent Word to such a feeble agency. But the secret Word of power which runs swiftly is entirely independent of sounds and noises, of tongues and ears!

This is a fact that should comfort us all and it should make some of you who have been silent try to speak, since God’s blessing does not rest on oratory and talent and the like. Have you not marked in this house—I speak without egotism—how, for more than 20 years the people have come together at every service, crowding these aisles and God has saved multitudes of souls? Critics say, “This man is not an orator!” And they speak the truth. I have never cultivated the arts of eloquence, or exhibited the elegancies of language. I speak what I know of God’s Word and bear my honest witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in such words as come to hand. The almighty Word of God reaches and renews the heart and the more it is allowed to work in an unencumbered manner, in its own natural simplicity, the more victorious it will be! The Word, of itself, “runs very swiftly” and carnal wisdom does but hamper it!

Oh to let it lay aside every weight! I could wish that men would take oratory by the ears and hang it up like a felon, for it has been the plague and curse of the Church of God that men try to speak finely and prettily, garnishing their sentences with poetic flowers and polishing them with needless elaboration! Preach the Gospel, Sir, for that is your business! We are not place-hunters, who must please if they would win, but soulhunters, who seek not to amuse men, but to save them! Proclaim God’s Word in such words as your heart suggests. Pluck up by the roots the flowers that grow in God’s fields and go not to the conservatory of learning and art to gather your fine prose! God will bless His own Word, for it is His Word which runs very swiftly!

Yet, note again, according to the text, God’s Word is most effectual. This is the meaning of the phrase, “it runs very swiftly.” None can deny this is the meaning of the phrase, “it runs very swiftly.” None can resist it, for God is in it. It is God’s will and when God wills it, what matters if all creation wills the contrary? “There are many devices in a man’s heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand.” The will of God would bear all opposers away as with a flood and sweep them like sear leaves before the tempest. There is little wonder that His Word runs very swiftly, for if God wills it, how can it be hindered? As it cannot be prevented altogether, so it cannot even be impeded if it is the very Word of God.

There a Word of God which may be hindered—His Gospel, as proclaimed—it may be resisted and cast aside. But the veritable Word of God, the inward Word, the secret will of the Highest is not resisted—it sweetly conquers the human will without violating its free agency and leads men captive in chains which they do not wish to break—it holds them spellbound by a force which they delight in! And they yield, charmed by the music of the love of God! It is glorious to think that God is still operating in the realm of Grace as well as of Nature by a power which is Omnipotent and this power runs very swiftly. There is no such thing as time with God, to whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. He may take centuries to accomplish His purposes, but if He wills it, all can be done in an instant! He may lengthen out the drama of Providence, even to thousands of years, but this is not for lack of power, for when He pleases, “He will finish the work and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth.”

God’s Word is never slow or lame. Neither can it be said of Him as of the hosts of Pharaoh, that His chariot wheels were taken off so that He drove them heavily. The counsel of the Lord stands forever! “The Lord of Hosts has sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand.” Over your heads, O mortal men, let the voice of this dread thunder roll—The Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Think not because you boast of your free agency that this can deprive Him of His almightiness— He still does as He wills among the armies of Heaven and among the inhabitants of this lower earth. Who can stay His hand or say unto Him, “What are You doing?” Where the word of a king is, there is power, but what is the power of the word of the King of Kings? It “runs very swiftly.”

II. Thus I have tried to set forth the general Truth of God, now LET US NOTICE THE PARTICULAR INSTANCES OF IT. First, God’s “Word runs very swiftly” in the matter of Creation. What says the first chapter of Genesis about the making or fitting up of this world? It tells us that in its present condition this world was arranged in six days and on the seventh day the Lord rested from His work. Was ever such a word as this? Was ever so vast a deed accomplished in such a space of time?

It is possible that the creation of the world had taken place long before, for “in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” but even for that first creation He needed no space of time, for His Word could create the universe with a flash. The Lord may have allowed ages upon ages to roll by before He ultimately came forth to perform the last upholstering of it for mankind—yet all was done when He spoke. God said, “Let there be light, and there was light.” He said, “Let there be a firmament,” and it was so. He spoke into being fish, fowl and beast and it was so—“In six days the Lord made Heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is”—for His Word runs very swiftly.”

We still see, in the works of Nature, the changes which God works. The wind may blow ever so fiercely from the north, but when the Lord commands, it whirls about towards the south and the calm may be profound. But almost in an instant the hurricane sweeps and tosses up the mighty waves of the sea. The vast changes which God works in Nature are, to us, gradual in their results, else we should be unprepared for them and catastrophe would follow catastrophe. But still, as far as God is concerned, He acts instantaneously when He wills and as He wills—and His will in Creation is achieved the moment that it comes to be an expressed Word!

Look further into the field of Providence and see how the Word of God has been operating there and has run very swiftly. Consider His providential judgments. God warned men that He would destroy them for their sin. He gave them space for repentance and sent His servant, Noah, to be a preacher of righteousness. He made the ark to be a visible sermon to them. But when, at last, His patience was ended, it did not take Him long to pull up the sluices from below and to open the bottles of Heaven from above. How speedily did He cover the tops of the mountains with the destroying waves! Peter tells us that by the Word of God, the world which then was, being overflowed with water, perished.

Look further on to the cities of the plain. When they were ripe for destruction, Lot saw the sun rise on Sodom and all was quiet and still as on this Sabbath morning, but in an instant the Lord rained fire and brimstone upon Sodom and destroyed it. When the Lord came to blows with Pharaoh, king of Egypt, how thick and fast the strokes came till the proud tyrant’s will was broken and he let the people go! Yes, “His Word runs very swiftly.” Whether it is to turn the river into blood, or cover the land with darkness, or destroy it with hailstones, or to slay all the first-born of Egypt, “His Word runs very swiftly.”

With a Word He slew the hosts of Sennacherib and stretched rider and horse in the deep sleep of death. His judgments are amazing! Look at Jerusalem—enquire for the ruins of her Temple—see how swiftly God fulfilled His decree of overthrow. Journey to Tyre, or Moab, or Edom. Get away to Babylon and Nineveh. Go and search and see where mighty empires once rioted in luxury. He told His Prophets that it would be so and lo, it has come to pass, for “His Word runs very swiftly.” Come, behold the works of the Lord! What desolation He has made in the earth. He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in sunder! He burns the chariot in the fire, “for His Word runs very swiftly.”

So also has His Word run very swiftly when it has been sent in peace. When God has meant to bless men, how swiftly His angels have taken wing to bring the gift from Heaven! Think of Israel shut up by the Red Sea with mountains on either hand. Oh how speedily the Lord descended from on high when He came to the rescue of His people!—

*“On cherub and on cherubim  
Full royally He rode,  
And on the wings of mighty winds  
Came flying all abroad.”*

He divided the Red Sea and led Israel through it like a flock of sheep in the wilderness, swiftly coming, by His Word, to make a way for them through the heart of the sea. So all through Scripture you will observe that in the afflictions of God’s people they have cried to Him and He has sent His Word and healed them! Glory be to the name of our Covenant God! In all His works, whether of judgment or of mercy, He tarries not for man, but executes His purpose even as He pleases.

For a moment let us reverently think OF THE ESSENTIAL WORD, to whom I referred, just now, whose name is to be always mentioned with deep devotion. How swiftly He ran upon His Father’s business. As our poet puts it—

*“Down from the shining seats above,  
With joyful haste He fled.”*

The life of Jesus upon earth reached little beyond 30 years and yet His work was finished before He left this earth for Glory. The Redemption of mankind, the bringing in of everlasting righteousness, the finishing of transgression, the fulfilling of the Law—all was done in a short season! No, you must shorten that, because the major part of His life was spent in obscurity, doing, doubtless, much, but not doing that part of His lifework which is perceptible to us. In some three years or so His Father’s public business was all accomplished!

With what diligence He worked! As to the actual Atonement, although I conceive it embraced the whole of His life, yet the central part of it lay in His passion and death. In the comet which has lately surprised us, much of the brilliance lies in its streaming tail, but the starry portion, or nucleus, is supposed to be the solid part of it. Even so, the reconciling work of Jesus shines from the manger to the garden and yet the more apparent parts of it are crowded into the few hours between Gethsemane and the Cross. In that space was Satan bruised, Death slain, Hell vanquished, sin wiped out forever, the saints redeemed, God glorified and the earth purchased out of bondage! In a few hours of agony and shame and death our Lord effected all. “His Word runs very swiftly.”

What a running that was when our Lord came forth as a Bridegroom out of His chamber and rejoiced as a strong man to run His race! He ran so swiftly for the joy that was set before Him, that He sweat, but not such sweat as yours and mine—it was a sweat of blood—such was the agony with which He ran to achieve the work which His Father had set before Him! He was no laggard. Does He not reprove your tardy footsteps and mine that, in so short a space, so grand, so infinite, so eternal a work should have been achieved? “Truly He ran very swiftly.” But now, to leave that point, this is true of the Word of God in matters of Grace—“His Word runs very swiftly.” I shall be sure to have your deep attention if you know the extreme importance of the Truth of God I am about to proclaim, namely, that the Word of God, when it comes to work effectually upon the hearts of men, is able to accomplish its end very swiftly, indeed.

I conceive that conviction of sin is, in many cases, if not in all, commenced in an instant! The unregenerated mind of man is like a flint and you do not break a flint by degrees—by one blow it is shivered. Here is the mind of man like a dark dungeon. God throws back the shutters and in streams the daylight at once. Conviction is like a wound—the mighty Spirit draws the great bow—away flies the arrow and in an instant it has pierced the heart! Through coats of mail of prejudice, that barbed shaft has gone and slain sin in the heart of man and that in a second of time! “His Word runs very swiftly.”

I know that God works thus in regeneration. Regeneration is not a work of years—from the necessity of the case the essential part of it is worked in an instant. There must be a moment in which a man is dead and another moment in which he is made alive! There can be no interval in which he is neither dead nor alive. Quickening must be an instantaneous operation. There must either be some life, however feeble, or else the man is dead—and the line between life and death must be narrow as a razor’s edge. Though you and I cannot see any sharp line between the line, yet there is such a line. A man is either dead or alive. The quickening of a soul into spiritual life remains a proof that God’s Word “runs very swiftly.”

So, also, with regard to justification. When a man believes in Jesus Christ, he is justified at once. I can show you that this must be so. A man may be guilty or not guilty, but he cannot be anywhere between the two. He may, according to the legal language of Scotland, be in a condition in which the charge is, “not proven but before God, who needs no proof, a man must either stand condemned or pardoned, and there cannot be an instant between the two.” In one moment God says to the guilty, “I forgive you.” Pardon is an instantaneous gift. You can be forgiven all your sins in half the tick of a clock and pass from death to life more swiftly than I can utter the words!

How wonderful it is to see the change which the Grace of God makes in the human heart in conversion! A man is not turned round and converted all at once, but the commencement of that turn comes at some particular moment and just at that moment it often happens that his most cherished idols come tumbling down! The idolatry of his soul is effectually rebuked. He cannot understand it, but the thing he once loved he begins to hate, while the things he hated, all of a sudden he loves and there is achieved in him a marvelous change! An objector declared, the other day, that we make out that a character is produced in men in a few hours. That a lifebuilding is run up during a single service. I am not about to deny the charge! The statement is not quite correct, but it will suffice!

We have all heard of the minister who visited a dying woman and was the means of bringing her to a joyful faith in Christ. But before he had left the house she was dead—he was known to say that he found her in a state of Nature, saw her in a state of Grace and left her in a state of Glory—and all within an hour! And so we do not make much of the power of God to accomplish wonders in a brief space of time! The new birth is a miracle worked by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God. It is impossible under any other view of things. If this miracle could be taken away from Christianity, what would remain?

Conversion and regeneration remain as the standing phenomena by which Christianity is continually proven to be Divine. The Word of God all of a sudden transforms the very nature of men and they enter into an altogether new state of life out of which there comes a character which glorifies God! The essence of that character is created in an instant! The Seed of God out of which it will all come is implanted at once. “His Word runs very swiftly” Adoption is also one of these rapid gifts. A man is made a child of God in an instant, for he may not be a child of God and he may be a child of God, but he cannot be half way between. There must be an instant in which adoption is bestowed and that instant I quote to illustrate the text—

*“His Word runs very swiftly.”*

Note again, dear Brothers and Sisters, that this is not only true of salvation at first, but it is true of the work of Grace in the heart all along. Do you feel dull and heavy this morning? God can revive you in a moment! “Before I was aware, my soul made me like the chariots of Amminadib.” Have you backslidden like Laodicea? Have you fallen into lukewarmness? “Ah, it will take months,” you say, “for me to get back.” It need not, for here is Christ’s Word to Laodicea, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hears my voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.” Open the door and let Christ come in and all will be healed! “His Word runs very swiftly.”

Are you desponding, are you despairing? He can take away your ashes and put upon your head the coronet of beauty in an instant! What said the spouse in the Canticles? “The voice of my Beloved! Behold, He comes leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills.” It need not take a long time for you to be refreshed and restored—Jesus can come with the riches of His Grace and straightway make you to rejoice in Him! Did not Jesus work immediate cures on the palsied and the lame? Is He not equally mighty to bless? Our Churches frequently require backsliders to wait a long time before they can be received. If a Brother wanders, the Churches generally deliver him for years to Satan and then, perhaps, try to get him back.

But it should not be so! John looked after Peter directly after Peter had been cursing and swearing and denying his Lord. And Jesus, Himself, said, “Go, tell My disciples and Peter,” within three days after Peter had fallen. My Lord’s forgiving love runs very swiftly! My Lord’s restoring Grace is swifter than an eagle’s wings! As it is with individuals, so it is with Churches. A whole Church can be revived on a sudden—no, not only a whole Church, but a

 group of Churches! No, not only that, but, if God wills it, all the Churches in Christendom may be refreshed with showers of blessing within another week. “His Word runs very swiftly.”

Remember how it was at the first. Within a short time after Pentecost all nations had heard the Word of God, so that Paul could say, “Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.” Like the coming of the morning, the Word of the Lord shone forth under the whole Heaven right speedily! It will be so again, but we must first be prepared for it. The vessels must be purged before the Master can use them in His great work. If God were to use most Christians and most Christian ministers in their present condition as instruments with which to accomplish His work, we might pass through centuries of centuries before it would be finished! But He can change all this and make His servants to be like angels and His ministers like flames of fire!

Many move along in Christ’s work at a snail’s pace, but if the Lord were to visit the aforesaid trudging fathers and make them leap like a hart with intense desire and bravery of faith—and then send His own Word by them—what is there to hinder a great revival? Suppose all the Church should wake up tomorrow with desires for days of prayer? What is there to prevent God’s hearing the united cry of His people? What is there to hinder Him from raising up hundreds of ministers to preach with tongues of fire? What is there to prevent missionaries going forth to the utmost ends of the earth? Who can stay His hand when once He makes bare His arm and comes forth to the fight?

Let us have greater belief in God! We scarcely believe in Him now! We are always measuring the balance to the credit of the missionary societies and counting up the agents. I believe in our excellent societies, but I believe in God over the head of them all. I believe in agencies, modes, systems, methods, but I believe much more in God, who can do far more abundantly than we either ask or think! May the Lord take us out into the deep and then we shall let down our nets for a catch and take a great multitude of fish! Alas, now we paddle about near shore and catch a few shrimp and boast of our wonderful success.

III. We shall close by noting WHAT IS THE TEACHING THAT YOU AND I MAY GET OUT OF THIS SUBJECT? One lesson is this. The seeking sinner can be saved now. If he seeks salvation at once, he can have it at once. Is there a movement in any mind after God? Do you say, “I will arise and go unto my Father”? Have you got as far as that? How long will it take you to get to your Father? Well, I cannot tell you—it is a long way—but let me whisper in your ear that there is another calculation. How long will it take your Father to come to you? The parable proceeds to say, “When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and ran.”

I cannot guess how fast the old gentleman in the parable could run, for hearts are often stronger than legs, but I know that He to whom the parable points when He runs, is not to be overtaken! If God runs, my Brothers and Sisters, what a pace must be meant! Sinner, if you are rising to go to Him, He runs to meet you! “His Word runs very swiftly.”—

*“Oh, how swift Divine compassion  
Runs to meet the mourning soul!  
And by words of consolation  
Makes the wounded spirit whole!”*

We read in the 107th Psalm of those who drew near to the gates of death and in their extremity, at the last gasp, they cried unto the Lord. Immediately, we read, “He sent His Word and healed them.” The cure was as speedy as it was complete! Why, the Lord can outstrip time! Is it not written, “Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear”? This beats the telegraph! You get an answer before you send the message, or while you are writing the message, here comes the reply!

O poor Soul, be comforted! You may have immediate pardon, immediate adoption, immediate justification! Mercy comes in a moment to you and you may go your way saying, “I have it! I have it! Why have I been looking so long for it, when the Word of God is near me, on my lips and in my heart?” God grant you Grace to receive, at this moment, the Word which saves the soul. Another lesson, and that has reference to our work for the souls of others. If God’s Word runs very swiftly, then it can even overtake those who run away from it! Not only can the Lord come quickly to those who seek Him, but He can overtake those who hasten away from Him! I can see the sheep running away. At what a rate they rush! Sheep never run so fast after the shepherd as away from him—they are nimble enough when once they get through a gap. Away they go!

They are over the hill and out of sight in no time. Will the shepherd catch them? That blessed Word who is their Shepherd, can He overtake the wanderers? Yes, “His Word runs very swiftly—“He can overtake the runaways. If a sheep has reached the brink of a precipice, the Great Shepherd runs so swiftly that He can save it even now. I say this to you workers that you may be encouraged to go to sick beds; that you may be encouraged to speak to aged men and women; that you may not think anybody is too far gone for Christ. If it were certain that without conversion a person would be in Hell in five minutes, it would still be both your duty and your privilege to preach the Gospel to him and to do it believing that in the space of five minutes the Grace of God could save Him!

“Dangerous doctrine,” says an objector, “people will be tempted to put off conversion.” Alas, if they did not forge an excuse out of this Truth of God, they would manufacture it out of another, for when men mean to do wrong, any perversion will serve their turn! I cannot deny a Truth because wicked men pervert it; that would be ridiculous! A rope is a good thing— would you have us destroy all the ropes in the world because a few madmen hang themselves with them? We will proclaim it to the ends of the earth that the Lord can save at the 11th hour! It is not too late for any of you, however aged you may be. What if you are to die tomorrow? I leave an impression that some here are not far from their end, yet, “His Word runs very swiftly,” and even now He can save you!

The dying thief forbids the idea that any praying penitent shall apply to Christ and find it too late. Postpone not salvation—but if you have delayed for years, make haste at once and may God’s infinite mercy come to you at the same hour. I close with this further remark. If you and I, dear Friends, are not numbered among the unconverted, but are really saved this morning and yet we are very heavy of heart, there is comfort here. The Lord can, at once, give us joy and peace. “I have a great trouble,” you say, “and if I do not get help by tomorrow night, I do not know what will become of me.” Well, God can deliver you by tomorrow night—“His Word runs very swiftly.”

“Oh, but I have a dread upon my heart and if I do not soon get rid of it, I shall be driven to despair.” He can console you at once, for the Comforter is already given. “I should like to come to the communion table,” says one. “I have not been there for a long time, for I do not feel fit and I do not think I can be prepared for the solemn service in the short space of one afternoon.” Oh yes, you may, for, “His Word runs very swiftly.” If Jesus washes your feet, you shall be clean every whit and clean at once! He can bear you up to the heights of fellowship and bring you into very close union with Himself in a moment of time. Limit not the Almighty as to speed—limit Him not in any way—with God all things are possible!

He can cause your dry rod to bud and blossom and bear fruit in an hour. Commit yourself to Him and pray Him to make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight and He can do it—and to Him shall be the praise forever and ever. Amen.

[Some years ago we prepared a large work for use at Family Prayer called, “The Interpreter.” It is an arrangement of the Scriptures for daily reading and short comments of our own are added. We are afraid that the present generation of our readers do not know of it. It cost us two years of steady labor and we should like to see it largely used. It is a fine volume and if purchased in the best binding it is a family treasure, to be handed down as an heirloom.—C. H. S.]

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FROST AND THAW

NO. 670

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 24, 1865, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“He gives snow like wool; He scatters the frost like ashes; He casts out His hail like morsels.  
Who can stand before His cold? He sends out**

**His word and melts them;  
He causes His wind to blow, and the waters flow.” Psalm 147:16-18.**

LOOKING out of our window one morning we saw the earth robed in a white mantle—in a few short hours the earth had been covered to a considerable depth with snow. We looked out again in a few hours and saw the fields as green as ever and the plowed fields as bare as if no single flake had fallen! It is no uncommon thing for a heavy fall of snow to be followed by a rapid thaw. These interesting changes are worked by God, not only with a purpose toward the outward world, but with some design toward the spiritual realm. God is always a teacher. In every action that He performs He is instructing His own children and opening up to them the road to inner mysteries.

Happy are those who find food for their Heaven-born spirits, as well as for their mental powers in the works of the Lord’s hand. I shall ask your attention, first, to the operations of nature spoken of in the text. And, secondly, to those operations of Divine Grace of which they are the most fitting symbols.

I. Consider first, THE OPERATIONS OF NATURE. We shall not think a few minutes wasted if we call your attention to the hand of God in frost and thaw, even upon natural grounds.

1. Observe the directness of the Lord’s work. I rejoice as I read these words, to find how present our God is in the world. It is not written, “the laws of nature produce snow,” but, “HE gives snow,” as if every flake came directly from the palm of His hand. We are not told that certain natural regulations form moisture into frost—no, but as Moses took ashes of the furnace and scattered them upon Egypt, so it is said of the Lord, “HE scatters the frost like ashes.” It is not said that the Eternal has set the world going, and by the operation of its machinery ice is produced. Oh no, but every single granule of ice descending in the hail is from God—“HE casts out His hail like morsels.”

Even as the slinger distinctly sends the stone out of his sling, so the path of every hailstone is marked by the Divine power. The hail is called, you observe, “His hail.” And in the next sentence we read of His cold. These words make nature strangely magnificent. When we look upon every hailstone as God’s hail, how precious the watery diamonds become! When we feel the cold nipping our limbs and penetrating through every garment, it consoles us to remember that it is His cold. When the thaw comes, see how the text speaks of it—“He sends out His word.”

He does not leave it to certain forces of nature, but like a king, “He sends out His word and melts them; He causes HIS wind to blow.” He has a special property in every wind—whether it comes from the north to freeze, or from the south to melt—it is HIS wind! Behold how in God’s temple everything speaks of His Glory. Learn to see the Lord in all scenes of the visible universe, for truly He works all things.

This thought of the directness of the Divine operations must be carried into Providence. It will greatly comfort you if you can see God’s hand in your losses and crosses. Surely you will not murmur against the direct agency of your God! This will put an extraordinary sweetness into daily mercies, and make the comforts of life more comfortable still, because they are from a Father’s hand. If your table is scantily furnished it shall suffice for your contented heart when you know that your Father spread it for you in wisdom and love. This shall bless your bread and your water! This shall make the bare walls of an ill-furnished room as resplendent as a palace, and turn a hard bed into a couch of down.

My Father does it all. We see His smile of love even when others see nothing but the black hand of Death smiting our best beloved. We see a Father’s hand when the pestilence lays our cattle dead upon the plain. We see God at work in mercy when we ourselves are stretched upon the bed of languishing. It is ever our Father’s act and deed! Do not let us get beyond this—but rather let us enlarge our view of this Truth of God and remember that this is true of the little as well as of the great. Let the lines of a true poet strike you—“If pestilence stalks through the land, you say the Lord has done it—has He not done it when an aphid creeps upon the rosebud? If an avalanche tumbles from its Alp, you tremble at the will of Providence—is not that will as much concerned when the sere leaves fall from the poplar?” Let your hearts sing of everything—JehovahShammah—the Lord is there.

2. Next, I beg you to observe with thanksgiving the ease of Divine working. These verses read as if the making of frost and snow were the simplest matter in all the world! A man puts his hand into a wool-pack and throws out the wool. God gives snow as easily as that! “He gives snow like wool.” A man takes up a handful of ashes and throws them into the air so that they fall around. “He scatters the frost like ashes.” Frost and snow are marvels of nature! Those who have observed the extraordinary beauty of the ice crystals have been enraptured, and yet they are like morsels—just as easily as we cast crumbs of bread outside the window to the robins during wintry days!

When the rivers are frozen hard, and the earth is held in iron chains, then the melting of the whole—how is that done? Not by kindling innumerable fires, nor by sending electric shocks from huge batteries through the interior of the earth—no—“He sends forth His word and melts them; He causes His wind to blow, and the waters flow.” The whole matter is accomplished with a word and a breath. If you and I had any great thing to do, what puffing and panting, what straining and tugging there would be! Even the great engineers who perform marvels by machinery make much noise and stir about it.

It is not so with the Almighty One. Our globe spins round in 24 hours, and yet it does not make so much noise as a humming top! And yonder ponderous worlds rolling in space track their way in silence. If I enter a factory I hear a deafening dropping over a wheel. There is a never ceasing click-clack, or an undying hum—but God’s great wheels revolve without noise or friction! Divine machinery works smoothly. This case is seen in Providence as well as in nature. Your heavenly Father is as able to deliver you as He is to melt the snow, and He will deliver you in as simple a manner if you rest upon Him. He opens His hand and supplies the want of every living thing as readily as He works in nature. Mark the ease of God’s working—He does but open His hand.

3. Notice in the next place the variety of the Divine operations in nature. When the Lord is at work with frost as His tool, He creates snow, a wonderful production—every crystal being a marvel of art. But then He is not content with snow—from the same water He makes another form of beauty which we call frost, and yet a third lustrous sparkling substance, namely glittering ice! And all these by the one agency of cold. What a marvelous variety the educated eye can detect in the several forms of frozen water!

The same God who solidified the flood with cold soon melts it with warmth. But even in thaw there is no monotony of manner—at one time the joyous streams rush with such impetuosity from their imprisonment that rivers are swollen and floods cover the plains. At another time, by slow degrees, in scanty driblets, the drops regain their freedom. The same variety is seen in every department of nature. So in Providence the Lord has a thousand forms of frosty trials with which to try His people, and He has ten thousand beams of mercy with which to cheer and comfort them!

He can afflict you with the snow trial, or with the frost trial, or with the ice trial if He wills. And another time He can, with His word, relax the bonds of adversity, and that in countless ways. Whereas men are tied to two or three methods in accomplishing their will, God is infinite in understanding and works as He wills by ways unknown of mortal minds.

4. I shall ask you, also, to consider the works of God in nature in their swiftness. It was thought a wonderful thing in the days of Ahasuerus that letters were sent by post upon swift horses. In our country we thought we had arrived at the age of miracles when the axles of our cars glowed with speed, and now that the telegraph is at work we stretch out our hands into infinity! But what is our speed compared with that of God’s operations? Well does the text say, “He sends forth His commandment upon earth: His word runs very swiftly.” Forth went the word, “Open the treasures of snow,” and the flakes descended in innumerable multitudes. And then it was said, “Let them be closed,” and not another snow-feather was seen.

Then spoke the Master, “Let the south wind blow and the snow be melted,” and it disappeared at the voice of His word. Believer, you cannot tell how soon God may come to your help. “He rode upon a cherub and did fly,” says David, “Yes, He did fly upon the wings of the wind.” He will come from above to rescue His beloved. He will rend the heavens and come down! With such speed will He descend that He will not stay to draw the curtains of Heaven, but He will rend them in His haste and make the mountains flow down at His feet—that He may deliver those who cry unto Him in the hour of trouble. That mighty God who can melt the ice so speedily can take to Himself the same eagle wings and hasten to your deliverance. Arise, O God! And let Your children be helped, and that right quickly!

5. One other thought. Consider the goodness of God in all the operations of nature and Providence. Think of that goodness negatively. “Who can stand before His cold?” You cannot help thinking of the poor in a hard winter—only a hard heart can forget them when you see the snow lying deep. But suppose that snow continued to fall! What is there to hinder it? The same God who sends us snow for one day could do the like for fifty days if He pleased. Why not?

And when the frost pinches us so severely, why should it not be continued month after month? We can only thank the goodness which does not send “His cold” to such an extent that our spirits expire. Travelers towards the North Pole tremble as they think of this question, “Who can stand before His cold?” For cold has a degree of omnipotence in it when God is pleased to let it loose. Let us thank God for the restraining mercy by which He holds the cold in check.

Not only negatively, but positively there is mercy in the snow. Is not that a suggestive metaphor? “He gives snow like wool.” The snow is said to warm the earth. It protects those little plants which have just begun to peep above ground and might otherwise be frostbitten. As with a garment of down the snow protects them from the extreme severity of cold. Watts sings, in his version of the hundred-and-forty-seventh Psalm—

*“His flakes of snow like wool He sends,  
And thus the springing corn defends.”*  
It was an idea of the ancients that snow warmed the heart of the soil,

gave it fertility, and therefore they praised God for it. Certainly there is much mercy in the frost, for pestilence might run a far longer race if it were not that the frost cries to it, “Up to here shall you come, but no farther.” Noxious insects would multiply until they devoured the precious fruits of the earth if sharp nights did not destroy millions of them so that these pests are swept from off the earth. Though man may think himself a loser by the cold, he is a great ultimate gainer by the decree of Providence which ordains winter!

The quaint saying of one of the old writers that, “snow is wool, and frost is fire, and ice is bread, and rain is drink,” is true, though it sounds like a paradox. There is no doubt that frost, in breaking up the soil, promotes fruitfulness, and so the ice becomes bread. Thus those agencies which for the moment deprive our workers of their means of sustenance, are the means by which God supplies every living thing. Mark, then, God’s goodness as clearly in the snow and frost as in the thaw which clears the winter’s work away.

Christian, remember the goodness of God in the frost of adversity. Rest assured that when God is pleased to send out the biting winds of affliction He is in them, and He is always love—as much love in sorrow as when He breathes upon you the soft south wind of joy. See the loving-kindness of God in every work of His hand! Praise Him—He makes summer and winter—let your song go round the year! Praise Him—He gives day and sends night—thank Him at all hours! Cast not away your confidence, it has great recompense of reward.

As David wove the snow, and rain, and stormy wind into a song, even so combine your trials, your tribulations, your difficulties and adversities into a sweet Psalm of praise, and say perpetually—

*“Let us, with a gladsome mind,*

*Praise the Lord, for He is kind.”*  
Thus much upon the operations of nature. It is a very tempting theme, but other fields invite me.

II. I would address you very earnestly and solemnly upon THOSE OPERATIONS OF GRACE OF WHICH FROST AND THAW ARE THE OUTWARD SYMBOLS. There is a period with God’s own people when He comes to deal with them by the frost of the Law. The Law is to the soul as the cutting north wind. Faith can see love in it, but the carnal eye of sense cannot. It is a cold, terrible, comfortless blast. To be exposed to the full force of the Law of God would be to be frostbitten with everlasting destruction. Even to feel it for a season would congeal the marrow of one’s bones and make one’s whole being stiff with fear. “Who can stand before His cold?”

When the Law comes forth thundering from its treasuries, who can stand before it? The effect of law-work upon the soul is to bind up the rivers of human delight. No man can rejoice when the terrors of conscience are upon him. When the Law of God is sweeping through the soul, music and dancing lose their joy—the bowl forgets its power to cheer—and the enchantments of earth are broken. The rivers of pleasure freeze to icy despondency. The buds of hope are suddenly nipped and the soul finds no comfort.

It was satisfied once to grow rich, but rust and canker are now upon all gold and silver. Every promising hope is frost-bitten, and the spirit is winter-bound in despair. This cold makes the sinner feel how ragged his garments are. He could strut about when it was summer weather and think his rags right royal robes—but now the cold frost finds out every tear in his garments, and in the hands of the terrible Law he shivers like the leaves upon the aspen. The north wind of judgment searches the man through and through. He did not know what was in him, but now he sees his inward parts to be filled with corruption and rottenness.

These are some of the terrors of the wintry breath of the Law. This frost of Law and terrors only tends to harden. Nothing splits the rock or makes the cliff tumble like frost when succeeded by thaw, but frost alone makes the earth like a mass of iron breaking the plowshare which would seek to pierce it. A sinner under the influence of the Law of God, apart from the Gospel, is hardened by despair and cries, “There is no hope, and therefore I will go after my lusts. Whereas there is no Heaven for me after this life, I will make a Heaven out of this earth! And since Hell awaits me, I will at least enjoy such sweets as sin may afford me here.”

This is not the fault of the Law—the blame lies with the corrupt heart which is hardened by it. Nevertheless, such is its effect. When the Lord has worked by the frost of the Law, He sends the thaw of the Gospel. When the south wind blows from the land of promise bringing precious remembrances of God’s fatherly pity and tender loving-kindness, then straightway the heart begins to soften and a sense of blood-bought pardon speedily dissolves it. The eyes fill with tears, the heart melts in tenderness, rivers of pleasure flow freely and buds of hope open in the cheerful air! A heavenly spring whispers to the flowers that were sleeping in the cold earth—they hear its voice, and lift up their heads, for “the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.”

God sends His Word, saying, “Your warfare is accomplished, and your sin is pardoned.” And when that blessedly cheering Word comes with power to the soul and the sweet breath of the Holy Spirit acts like the warm south wind upon the heart, then the waters flow and the mind is filled with holy joy, and light, and liberty!—

*“The legal wintry state is gone,  
The frosts are fled, the spring comes on.  
The sacred turtledove we hear  
Proclaims the new, the joyful year.”*

Having shown you that there is a parallel between frost and thaw in nature and Law and Gospel in Grace, I would utter the same thoughts concerning Grace which I gave you concerning nature.

1. We began with the directness of God’s works in nature. Now, beloved Friends, remark the directness of God’s works in Grace. When the heart is truly affected by the Law of God. When sin is made to appear exceedingly sinful. When carnal hopes are frozen to death by the Law. When the soul is made to feel its barrenness and utter death and ruin—this is the finger of God! Do not speak of the minister. It was well that he preached earnestly—God has used him as an instrument—but God works all.

When the thaw of Divine Grace comes, I pray you will discern the distinct hand of God in every beam of comfort which gladdens the troubled conscience, for it is the Lord, alone, who binds up the broken in heart and heals all their wounds! We are far too apt to stop in instrumentalities. Folly makes men look to sacraments for heart-breaking or heart-healing, but sacraments all say, “It is not in us.” Some of you look to the preaching of the Word and look no higher. But all true preachers will tell you, “It is not in us.”

Eloquence and earnestness at their highest pitch can neither break nor heal a heart. This is God’s work! Yes, and not God’s secondary work in the sense in which the philosopher admits that God is in the laws of nature— but God’s personal and immediate work. He puts forth His own hand when the conscience is humbled, and it is by His own right hand that the conscience is eased and cleansed. I desire that this thought may abide upon your minds for you will not praise God otherwise. Nor will you be sound in doctrine.

All departures from sound doctrine on the point of conversion arise from forgetfulness that it is a Divine work from first to last—that the faintest desire after Christ is as much the work of God as the gift of His dear Son—and that our whole spiritual history through, from the Alpha to the Omega, the Holy Spirit works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure. As you have evidently seen the finger of God in casting forth His ice and in sending thaw, so I pray you recognize the handiwork of God in giving you a sense of sin and in bringing you to the Savior’s feet. Join together in heartily praising the wonder-working God who does all things according to the counsel of His will—

*“Our seeking Your face  
Was all of Your Grace!  
Your mercy demands and shall have all the praise: No sinner can be  
Beforehand with You,  
Your Grace is preventing, almighty and free.”*

2. The second thought upon nature was the ease with which the Lord worked. There was no effort or disturbance. Transfer that to the work of Divine Grace. How easy it is for God to send law-work into the soul! You stubborn Preacher, you cannot touch him! And even Providence has failed to awaken him. He is dead—altogether dead in trespasses and sins! But if the glorious Lord will graciously send forth the wind of His Spirit, that will melt him.

The swearing reprobate, whose mouth is blackened with profanity—if the Lord does but look upon him and make bare His arm of Irresistible Grace—shall yet praise God and bless His name! And he will live to His honor. Do not limit the Holy One of Israel. Persecuting Saul became loving Paul, and why should not that person be saved of whose case you almost despair? Your husband may have many points which make his case difficult, but no case is desperate with God! Your son may have offended both against Heaven and against you, but God can save the most hardened. The sharpest frost of obstinate sin must yield to the thaw of Divine Grace. Even huge icebergs of crime must melt in the Gulf stream of infinite love.

Poor Sinner, I cannot leave this point without a word to you. Perhaps the Master has sent the frost to you, and you think it will never end. Let me encourage you to hope, and yet more, to pray for gracious visitations. Miss Steele’s verses will just suit your mournful, yet hopeful state—

*“Stern winter throws his icy chains,  
Encircling nature round.  
How bleak, how comfortless the plains,  
Late with bright verdure crowned!  
The sun withdraws his vital beams,  
And light and warmth depart.  
And, drooping lifeless, nature seems  
An emblem of my heart—  
My heart, where mental winter reigns  
In night’s dark mantle clad,  
Confined in cold, inactive chains!  
How desolate and sad!  
Return, O blissful sun, and bring  
Your soul-reviving ray—  
This mental winter shall be spring,  
This darkness cheerful day.”*

It is easy for God to deliver you. He says, “I have blotted out like a thick cloud your transgressions.” I stood the other evening looking up at a black cloud which was covering all the heavens and I thought it would surely rain. I entered the house and when I came out again the sky was all blue—the wind had driven the clouds away. So may it be with your soul. It is an easy thing for the Lord to put away sin from repenting sinners. All obstacles which hindered our pardon were removed by Jesus when He died upon the Cross, and if you believe in Him you will find that He has cast your sins into the depths of the sea! If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believe.

3. The next thought concerning the Lord’s work in nature was the variety of it. Frost produces a sort of trinity in unity—snow, frost, ice—and when the thaw comes its ways are many. So is it with the work of God in the heart. Conviction comes not alike to all. Some convictions fall as the snow from Heaven—you never hear the flakes descend—they alight so gently one upon the other. There are softly coming convictions—they are felt, but we can scarcely tell when we began to feel them. A true work of repentance may be of the gentlest kind.

On the other hand, the Lord casts forth His ice like morsels—the hailstones rattle against the window and you think they will surely force their way into the room! And to many persons convictions come beating down till they remind you of hailstones. There is variety. It is as true a frost which produces the noiseless snow as that which brings forth the terrible hail. Why should you want hailstones of terror? Be thankful that God has visited you, but do not dictate to Him the way of His working.

With regard to the Gospel thaw. If you may but be pardoned by Jesus, do not stipulate as to the manner of His Grace. Thaw is universal and gradual, but its commencement is not always discernible. The chains of winter are unloosed by degrees—the surface ice and snow melt—and byand-by the warmth permeates the entire mass till every rock of ice gives way. But while thaw is universal and visible in its effects you cannot see the mighty power which is doing all this. Even so you must not expect to discern the Spirit of God.

You will find Him gradually operating upon the entire man, enlightening the understanding, freeing the will, delivering the heart from fear, inspiring hope, waking up the whole spirit, gradually and universally working upon the mind and producing the manifest effects of comfort, and hope, and peace. But you can no more see the Spirit of God than you can see the south wind. The effect of His power is to be felt, and when you feel it, do not marvel if it is somewhat different from what others have experienced. After all, there is a singular likeness in snow and frost and ice, and so there is a remarkable sameness in the experience of all God’s children! But there is still a great variety in the inward operations of Divine Grace.

4. We must next notice the rapidity of God’s works. “His word runs very swiftly.” It did not take many days to get rid of the last snow. A contractor would take many a day to cart it away, but God sends forth His word and the snow and ice disappear at once. So is it with the soul—the Lord often works rapidly when He cheers the heart. You may have been a long time under the operation of His frosty Law, but there is no reason why you should be another hour under it. If the Spirit enables you to trust in the finished work of Christ, you may go out of this house rejoicing that every sin is forgiven!

Poor Soul, do not think that the way from the horrible pit is to climb, step by step, to the top! Oh, no! Jesus can set your feet upon a rock before the clock shall have gone round the dial. He can, in an instant, bring you from death to life, from condemnation to justification. “Today shall you be with Me in Paradise,” was spoken to a dying thief, black and defiled with sin. Only believe in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ and you shall be saved!

5. Our last thought upon the operation of God was His goodness in it all. What a blessing that God did not send us more law-work than He did! “Who can stand before His cold?” Oh, Beloved, when God has taken away from man natural comfort and made him feel Divine wrath in his soul, it is an awful thing! Speak of a haunted man—no man need be haunted with a worse ghost than the remembrance of his old sins.

The childish tale of the sailor with the old man of the mountain on his back who pressed him more and more heavily is more than realized in the history of the troubled conscience. If one sin does but leap on a man’s back it will sink the sinner through every standing place that he can possibly mount upon! He will go down, down, under its weight till he sinks to the lowest depths of Hell. There is no place where sin can be borne till you get upon the Rock of Ages—and even there the joy is not that you bear it— but that Jesus has borne it all for you!

The spirit would utterly fail before the Law if it had full sway. Thank God, “He stays His rough wind in the day of His east wind.” At the same time, how thankful we may be that we ever felt the law frost in our soul. The folly of self-righteousness is killed by the winter of conviction. We should have been a thousand times more proud and foolish, and worldly than we are if it had not been for the sharp frost with which the Lord nipped the growths of the flesh.

But how shall we thank Him sufficiently for the thaw of His lovingkindness? How great the change which His mercy made in us as soon as its beams had reached our soul! Hardness vanished! Cold departed! Warmth and love abounded, and the life-floods leaped in their channels! The Lord visited us and we rose from our grave of despair even as the seeds arise from the earth! As the bulb of the crocus holds up its golden cup to be filled with sunshine so did our new-born faith open itself to the Glory of the Lord!

As the primrose peeps up from the sod to gaze upon the sun, so did our hope look forth for the promise, and delight itself in the Lord. Thank God that spring tide has with many of us matured into summer, and winter has gone, never to return. We praise the Lord for this every day of our lives, and we will praise Him when time shall be no more in that sunny land—

*“Where everlasting spring abides,  
And never withering flowers.  
A thread-like stream alone divides  
That heavenly land from ours.”*

Believe in the Lord, you who shiver in the frost of the Law, and the law of love shall soon bring you warm days of joy and peace. So be it. Amen.  
Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #1302 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

GOOD CHEER FOR OUTCASTS  
NO. 1302

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 15, 1876, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.”  
Psalm 147:2.**

DOES not this show us the great gentleness and infinite mercy of God? And as we know most of God in the Person of our Lord, Jesus Christ, should it not charm us to remember that when He came on earth He did not visit kings and princes, but He came unto the humble and simple folk? He did not seek out Pharisees, wrapped up in their own supposed righteousness, but He sought out the guilty, for He said, “They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick.”

The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost! It would have seemed natural that our Lord Jesus, when He came here, should, first of all, have addressed Himself to the most respectable people He could find and should have sent His message to the rabbis of Jerusalem, to the senators at Rome, to the philosophers of Greece. But instead, the common people heard Him gladly and He rejoiced in spirit while He said, “I thank You, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because You have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.”

I think you may judge of a man’s character by the persons whose affection he seeks. If you find a man seeking only the affection of those who are great, depend upon it, he is ambitious and self-seeking. But when you observe that a man seeks the affection of those who can do nothing for him, but for whom he must do everything, you know that he, himself, is not seeking, but that pure benevolence sways his heart. When I read in the text that the Lord gathers together the outcasts of Israel—and when I see that the text is truly applicable to the Lord Jesus Christ, because this is just what He did—I see another illustration of the gentleness of His heart, who said, “Take My yoke upon you, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls.”

Be glad tonight, dear Friends, that we gather around such a Savior as this, from whom all pride and self-seeking are absent and who, coming down among us in gentleness and meekness, comes to gather those whom no man cares for—those who are judged to be worthless and irreclaimable! He comes to gather together the outcasts of Israel! Applying this text to our Lord Jesus Christ, we not only see His gentleness, but we also clearly see an illustration of His love to men, as men. If you seek only after rich men, suspicion arises—and it is more than suspicion—that you seek their wealth rather than they. If you aim only at the benefit of wise men, it is probably true that it is their wisdom which attracts you, and not their manhood.  
But the Lord Jesus Christ did not love men because of any advantageous circumstances, or any commendable incidents of their condition. His love was to manhood. He loved His own chosen people as men, not as this or that among men. He has no respect for rank, nor care for wealth. A man is a man with Christ whether the “guinea-stamp” is there or not. He died not for titles and dignities, but for men. “Not yours, but you,” our Lord Jesus could truly say. Where Jesus Christ sees a man, though he is an outcast, an outlaw or one condemned by the law of his own country— He sees a human being—a creature capable of awful sin and terrible misery, but yet, renewed by Grace, capable of bringing wondrous glory to the Most High.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, by gathering together the outcasts, proves that it is not the things which surround men, but the men, themselves, that He cares for. He considers not so much where a man is, but what he is—not what he has learned, or what he is thought of, or what he has done—just what he is. The man is the jewel. The immortal soul is the Pearl of Great Price which Jesus seeks as a merchantman seeks goodly pearls. Another thing is also clear. If Jesus gathers together the outcasts of Israel, it proves His power over the hearts of men. There is a certain class of men who follow that which is morally good because the Lord has given them a noble disposition. Thank God, He has, in mercy, been pleased to give some men a desire after that which is beautiful and true. They, too, are merchantmen seeking goodly pearls, and it is not difficult, when the heart is brought into such a desirable state, for the excellence and beauty of Jesus Christ to attract it!

But here is a tug of war—there are men still left in the guilt and filthiness of human nature who have no desire after that which is good—but whose entire longings are after evil, only evil and that continually. These have no more eye to anything that is high and noble than the swine has for the stars. The minister of Christ may appeal to them, but he will appeal in vain. And Providence may warn them, by the deaths of others and by personal sickness, but they are not to be separated from the earth to which they are glued. Yet our Lord Jesus can gather together even these, the outcasts of Israel! Such is His power that He does not stop till He sees good desires in men—He imparts those desires to those who have them not! Such are the charms of His Cross, that blind eyes are made to see by its beauty! Such is the music of His voice, that deaf ears are opened by it! Such is the majesty of His life, that the dead hear His voice and they that hear are made to live!

No groundwork of goodness is asked or expected from any man that Christ may come and act upon it—He takes man in his ruin and in the extremity of his depravity—and begins with him then and there. When the good Samaritan came to the wounded man, he did not wait for him to make the first advance, or come a little towards him. He went to him, where he was, and poured into his wounds the oil and the wine. So the Lord comes where hurtful nature is and, bad as its condition is, He stoops to it and He gathers together the outcasts of Israel! Oh, it is a wonderful thing, this, that there should be attractions about the Lord Jesus Christ which can draw to Him those whom nothing else that is good can possibly stir!

You may preach virtue to the sinner, but he does not practically yield to its charms. You may preach to the drunk, to the unchaste, to the immoral, the beauties and excellences of honesty and of all the virtues and the Graces, but little good will come of it—the result is infinitesimal. You may charm very wisely upon those subjects, but these deaf adders do not care for charming. We have heard of a Divine who said that he had preached honesty till he had not an honest person left in the parish! And he preached of virtue till he did not know where Diogenes, with his lantern, could find it! Nothing worth having comes of preaching when Christ is not the theme!

You may preach the Law and men will be frightened by it, but they will forget their fears. Yet if Jesus Christ is preached, He draws all men unto Him. The most wicked will listen to the news of Him who is able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by Him. The most stubborn have been known to weep when they have heard the story of His grief and of His love! The most proud have found themselves suddenly humbled at His feet, of which some of us are witnesses, for we marveled to find the hardness and loftiness of our hearts suddenly removed by a sense of His goodness! I do not believe that we preachers have half enough, or a tenth enough faith in Jesus Christ. If we could preach Jesus Christ to a company of convicted felons, should we be wrong in hoping to see the larger part of them converted on the spot?

If we had but faith enough to preach to them as we should, aiming directly, distinctly and believingly at their souls, might we not look for great results? We go so timidly, so doubtingly to work. We pray that God would save some out of our congregations and that He would be pleased to bless the Word here and there! But, such a splendid Gospel as we have to preach should not be preached so, nor should we so pray about it! When Moses lifted up the bronze serpent in the wilderness, it was not with this prayer—“Lord, grant that one or two of those who are bitten by the serpent may look and live.” No, Moses came out boldly with his serpent high upon the pole! He believed that thousands would look—they did look—and they lived! May we, after the same manner, proclaim Jesus who “gathers together the outcasts of Israel.”

Now, with this introduction, I would speak upon the text a little more particularly, and we shall observe with brevity, first, to whom the text applies—“He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.” Secondly, we shall consider in what sense He may be said to gather them. And then, thirdly, what lesson this teaches us.

I. First, then, TO WHOM MAY THIS TEXT APPLY—“He gathers together the outcasts of Israel”? It refers to several classes in different ways. First, it is a fact that our Lord Jesus gathered together some of the very poorest and most despised among men— those who might, under some respects, be regarded as outcasts. And it is certain that, to this day, the Gospel comes in the largest measure of power to the poor of this world. Often, too, it comes with amazing power to those who are despised by others, or are regarded as being of inferior degree.  
You know that at this time it is boastfully said by the enemies of the

Gospel that the culture, the brain, the intellect, the education of England is all on the side of skepticism. I am not so sure. When people say that they possess a great deal of brains, I am not certain that their claim is correct, unless it is that as sheep have a good deal of brains and yet are not the wisest animals in the world, so these gentlemen, also, are no wiser than they should be. As to those gentlemen who so evidently claim to be the cultured people, who monopolize all the sweetness and the light, I am not clear that they have all the modesty. It does seem to me that if they talked in a lower key, it would be as well. And if they thought a little less of their own culture and allowed a little more to other people, we might have more faith in this wonderful “culture” of theirs.

Some of us have failed to see the deep thought and the profound learning we were told to look for in the books of the skeptical cultured mind and, therefore, we are less patient when we hear the perpetual bragging of our foes. Still, let it stand so. We will not quarrel with it. Suppose it to be so—that none but foolish people embrace the old-fashioned faith— Puritanism which, they say, is nearly dead—the old evangelism which they ridicule as being exploded. Let it be so, that we are an inferior order of people with very little brains and all that. Well, we are not out of heart on that account, because we find that it so happened in our Savior’s day and has happened all days since—that the wisdom of the world has been at enmity with God.

And it has also flamed out that the foolishness of God has been wiser than men and God has mastered human wisdom by the foolishness of preaching! By that Gospel which wise men laughed at as being folly, God has brought carnal wisdom to nothing! The Lord Jesus Christ looks with love on those whom others look down upon with scorn—

*“He takes the fool and makes him know.  
The wonders of His dying love,  
To lay aspiring wisdom low,  
And all our pride reprove.”*

I am thankful when I meet with poor saints and see what a grip humble men and women get of the promises of God. Laboring men, humble shepherds and the like have often been more distinguished for deep insight into the mysteries of Grace than learned doctors of divinity! Where there has been little in the cupboard and the provision on the table has been but slender, there has been more enjoyment of the favor of God than among the great ones of the earth!

They may regard those who still stand by the old-fashioned Truth of God as being outcasts from the commonwealth of letters and not worthy to be named among the cultured intellects of the age, but if the Lord will but gather us continually to His bosom and refresh us with Himself, we shall be content! The text should be a source of joy to us if any of us happen to be extremely poor—so poor that even Christian men are so ungenerous as to give us the cold shoulder, or if we happen to be the despised ones of our family. Here and there, sad to say it, there will be, in families, a better one than the rest, less thought of than the others—a Joseph whom his brothers hate because he loves his God.

Well, you may become as a stranger to your mother’s children and you may have no one to give you a good word, yet may you put this verse under your tongue as a sweet morsel—“He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.” Those who are lowest in the esteem of men are still remembered by the Lord! The text may be applied very well to those who have made themselves outcasts by their wickedness and are deservedly cast out of society. May God grant that none of us may be, or may have been, among that number. But if I should be addressing any such at this time, I have a word for them. If there should be some such here, tonight, who do not often attend places of worship, but have dropped in from curiosity, I may suppose your case to be that of one who has broken a mother’s heart and brought a father’s gray hairs to the grave with grief.

You have lived such a life that your own brothers could scarcely be expected to acknowledge you. You have sinned and sinned terribly. Man or woman—for woman, also, becomes an outcast—she is too severely treated, as a general rule, and more often becomes an outcast than the man who deserves it more! If I address such, it is a great joy to me to know that our Lord Jesus Christ can save the most wicked of the wicked, the most fallen of the fallen, the most depraved of the depraved! If you have sunk so low that there is not much to choose between you and a devil—and some men and women do get as low as that—yet Jesus Christ can lift you up!

If your life story is such that it would be a pity it should ever be told and most grievous that it should ever have been enacted, yet Jesus can wash all the stains of your life away and save you, even you! Only one such may be present here to-night, but I make no apology for concentrating my whole thoughts upon one single person! I leave the 99, to go after the one lost sheep, that in the one lost one may be revealed the richness and freeness of the Grace of God in Jesus Christ! Come, then, Outcast! Come to your Redeemer and find pardon! “Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as snow! Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool!” Jesus is able to wash away every transgression from those who are steeped in guilt. Countless iniquities dissolve and disappear before the presence of His mighty love, for He, even Jesus, gathers together the outcasts of Israel!

Is there no helper on earth? Yet is there One in Heaven! Is there no friend below? Yet is there One above! Is there nothing that can save you? Do you contemplate suicide? Stop, stop your hand, for Jesus is “able to save to the uttermost”—to the uttermost—“them that come unto God by Him.” Let the prayer go up, “God be merciful to me a sinner,” and go your way with hope in your soul, for “He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.”

A third class of persons consists of those who judge themselves to be outcasts, though, as to outward actions they certainly do not deserve the label. Many who have written about John Bunyan have been surprised at the description which he gives of his own life, for it does not appear that, with the sole exception of the use of blasphemous language, John Bunyan was one of the very worst of mankind. But he thought himself to be so. Now it often happens—I do not say always, but I think it is generally so— that when the Spirit of God comes, with power, to the conscience and

awakens it, the man judges himself to be the very chief of sinners.

For it may be that you have never gone into actual vice. You have never been a blasphemer or dishonest. You have, on the contrary, from the instructions of your childhood, been led into the path of right—and yet, when you are awakened, you may feel yourself to be vilest of the vile. Everything that is lovely and of good report has been found in you—you do not know the time in which you would not have been shocked to hear a blasphemous word—and yet when the Holy Spirit awakens you, you will plead guilty among the very worst! I know in my own case I had a horror of ungodliness. And, yet, when the Spirit of God came to me, I felt myself to be far worse than the swearer or the drunk—for this reason—that I knew that many who indulged in those open sins did so ignorantly. They did so from the imitation of those in whose society they had been brought up.

But as for me, with a godly parentage, with a mother’s prayers and tears, with light and knowledge, understanding the letter of the Gospel, having read the Bible from my youth, up, I felt that my sins were blacker than those of others because I had sinned against light and knowledge. And you must have felt the same, I am persuaded. Perhaps you are even, now, feeling it. You remember that night when you stifled conviction, when conscience had an earnest battle with you and it seemed that you must yield to God and to His Christ—but you deliberately did violence to the inward principle and resolved to go on in sin. Do you remember that? If you do, it will sting you as does a serpent, now that you are under conviction of sin—and you will feel yourself to be the very chief of sinners on account of it, though no public sin may ever have stained your life.

Well, I should not wonder, if such is your condition, that you also judge that there is no salvation for you—that God might save your mother, your brother, or your friend—but not you. You believe the blood of Jesus to be very precious, but you think it never will be applied to you. You heard, the other day, of the conversion of a friend and you felt glad, but at the same time you thought, “Grace will never come to me.” When the preacher has exhorted his hearers to believe in Jesus Christ, you have said, “Ah, but I— I cannot! I am in a condition in which that Gospel is of no use to me.” You think yourself an outcast. You feel that you deserve to be.

You are not content to be so, but, at the same time, you could not blame the Lord if He left you to perish. You feel that your transgressions have been so great that if He should leave you out of His gracious plans and Grace should come to others and not to you, you could only bow your head in bitterest sorrow and say, “You are just, O God.” Now, listen, you who have condemned yourself! The Lord absolves you! You who have shut yourself out as an outcast, you shall be gathered! For whereas they call you an outcast, whom no man seeks after, you shall be called Hephzibah, for the Lord’s delight is in you! Only believe in Jesus Christ and cast yourself upon Him! Outcasts of this sort are the people who most gladly welcome Christ. People who have nowhere else to go but to Him—people so cast down, so full of sin, so everything but what they ought to be— these are the people to whom Christ is very precious!

“Oh,” says one, “but I do not feel like that. I cannot feel my guilt as I should.” Very well, then, you are one of the outcasts among the outcasts— you do not think yourself to be as good, even, as they are! You are, in your own esteem, one of the worst outcasts of them all because you lack even the feeling of your need. You say, “I have a hard heart. I cannot see sin as others have seen it who have found Christ. I wish I could. I smite my breast and mourn that I cannot mourn, for if anything is felt, it is only pain to find that I cannot feel. I seem made of Hell-hardened steel which will not melt or break.”

Well, I see that you are, but, “such were some of us.” We, also, knew our insensibility and lamented that we could not lament! But He gathered us! And there stands the text, “He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.” If you have not a broken heart, only Christ can give it to you! If you cannot come to Him with it, go to Him for it! If you cannot come to Him wounded, come to Him that He may wound you and make you whole! You need bring nothing to Jesus! I would like to whisper in your ear just this— that those people who think themselves insensible, generally think so because they are more than usually sensitive. And those who think that they do not feel, are usually those who feel the most! I do not think we are ever good judges of our own feeling in this matter.

The day may come when, in looking back, you will say, “I did, after all, mourn over sin when I thought that I did not. I had such a sense of how black it was that I felt I was not mourning enough, even when I was deeply mourning!” Brother, you never will mourn enough. Enough? Would oceans full of tears be enough to mourn the guilt of sin? No, but, blessed be God, we are not asked to repent or to mourn up to a certain standard! O outcast Soul, trust in Jesus and He will save you! I must not dwell, however, on this class, but proceed further to notice that there is another sort of people whom Jesus gathers who are even more truly the outcasts of Israel.

I mean the backsliders from the Church—the outcasts of Israel who have been put out, and properly put out, for their unholy lives and inconsistent actions—those whom the Church is obliged, alas, to look upon as diseased members that must be removed. They are sickly sheep that infect the flock and must be put away. They are lepers that must be set aside from the camp. O Wanderer, banished from a Church, there is a word in the Gospel for you, also—even for the backslider! The Lord calls back His wandering children. Though His Church does right to put out those who do dishonor to His holy name, yet she would do wrong if she did not follow her Lord in saying, “Return, you backsliding children.”

It is not easy to persuade one who has been a backslider to come back to his first love. The return journey is uphill and flesh and blood do not assist us in it. Many new converts come, but the old wanderers remain outside and sometimes they do this because they fancy they will not be welcome. But if you are sincerely repenting of the sin which has put you away from the Church, the Church of Christ will be glad to receive you! And if you are, indeed, the Lord’s believing one, though you have defiled yourself, He does not forget you! He does earnestly remember you, still, and He bids you come, in all your defilement, and wash in His atoning

blood!

The fountain that Jesus has opened is not only for strangers, when they are first brought near—but it is opened “for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem”—those who know the Lord, that they may be daily purged from their transgressions and be cleansed from the filthiness of their backslidings. The Lord gathers together those who have been carried captive by their sins and makes them, once more, to dwell in the land of uprightness—and all His wandering sheep He brings back to Himself.

The expression of the text may certainly be applied to those, also, who have loved the Lord for years, but who have fallen into great depression of spirit. We happen, every now and then, to meet with some of the best of God’s people who get into the Slough of Despond and stick there by the month together—yes, by the year together! These are Believers who take periodically to despondency, as birds do to molting, and when the fit is on them you cannot cheer or comfort them. They then write bitter things against themselves and call themselves all the ugly names in the dictionary—until they make us smile to hear them—because we know how mistaken they are. We are admiring their consistency and they are mourning over their foolishness.

We see their generosity towards the cause of God and their devotion to everything that is good. Yet they say there is nothing good in them. We know where they are, for we have been laid in iron, ourselves, and set fast in the very same stocks. What a mercy it is that when you who love the Lord thus, and sit down and commune with your despondencies—I mean you, Miss Much-Afraid, you, Mr. Ready-to-Halt and you, Mr. FeebleMind—my Lord does not leave you nor judge you as you judge yourselves! He is pleased to gather together, in mercy, those who think themselves outcasts in Israel.

Lastly, upon this point, there are some who become outcasts through their love to Christ and of these the text is peculiarly true. I mean those who suffer for righteousness’ sake till they are regarded as the off-scouring of all things. Are there any that serve God faithfully, who have escaped the trial of cruel mockery? The names of those who are eminently useful are generally used as footballs for an ungodly world. The world is not worthy of them and yet their enemies think they are hardly worthy to live in the world. We do not hear much about persecution nowadays, but in private life there is a world of it! The cold shoulder is given where once friendship was sought—hard, cruel, cutting things are said where once admiration was expressed—and separations take place between good friends because of Christ.

It is still true, in the Christian’s case, that a man’s foes are they of his own household. But if you should become an outcast upon the face of the earth for Christ’s sake, there is this for your comfort—“The Lord does build up Jerusalem, He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.” Of the persecuted He makes pillars in His holy temple forever. Blessed are those who are outcasts for Christ! Rich are those who are so honored as to be permitted to become poor for Him! Happy are they who have had this Grace given them—to be permitted to lay life, itself, down for Jesus Christ’s sake!

II. Now a few words upon the second point—IN WHAT SENSE DOES THE LORD JESUS GATHER TOGETHER THESE OUTCASTS OF DIFFERENT CLASSES? Of course I should have to vary the explanation to suit each case, but as that would take a long time, let me say that the Lord Jesus has several ways of gathering together the outcasts. He gathers them to hear the Gospel. Preach Jesus Christ and they will come! Both outcast saints and outcast sinners will come to hear the charming sound of His blessed name! They cannot help it. Nothing draws like Jesus Christ!

Jesus Christ next gathers them to Himself. The parable of the wedding feast is repeated again, “Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in, that My house may be filled.” “Bring in here the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.” In this sort, the Lord Jesus Christ gathers multitudes where He is faithfully preached. He gathers all sorts of characters and especially the odds and ends of society—the despised of men and the despised of themselves. He gathers them to Himself.

And oh, what a blessed gathering place that is where there is cleansing for their filthiness, health for their disease, clothing for their nakedness and all-sufficient supplies for their abundant necessities! He gathers them to Himself—which is to gather them to God—to gather them to blessedness and peace through reconciliation with the Father. “To Him shall the gathering of the people be.”

When He has done that, He gathers them into the Divine family. He takes the outcasts and makes them children of God—heirs with Himself. From the dunghill He lifts them and sets them among princes! He takes them from the swine trough and puts the ring on their fingers and the shoes on their feet—and they sit down at the Father’s table to feast and to be glad! Jesus Christ, as the good Shepherd, gathers the lost sheep, the lame, the halt, the diseased and feeds them. He makes them to lie down and restores their souls and, finally, He leads them to the rich pastures of the Glory Land.

In due time the Lord gathers together the outcasts into His visible Church. As David enrolled a company of men that were in debt and discontented, so does Jesus Christ gather the indebted ones and the malcontents and makes them His soldiers. These are known as the Church militant. Surely as David did great exploits by those Pelethites, Cherethites, Gittites and strange men of foreign extraction whom he gathered to himself, so does Jesus of Nazareth do great things by those great sinners whom He greatly forgives—those hard-hearted ones whom He so strangely changes and makes to be the Old Guard of His army.

Yes, He gathers them into His Church and He gathers them into His work. The outcasts of Israel He uses for His own Glory. And when He has done that, He gathers them into Heaven. What a surprise it must be for any man to find himself in Heaven when he remembers where he once was! The outcast remembers the ale-bench on which he sat and soaked himself in liquor till he degraded himself below the brute beast. And now to be cleansed in the Redeemer’s blood and to sit among the angels—this will be surprising Grace, indeed! “Oh, to think,” one might well say, “that

I, who was once in lewd company, polluted and defiled, am now made to wear a crown and sit at the Redeemer’s feet!”

When we reach Heaven, Brothers and Sisters, I do not suppose that we shall forget all the past. And sometimes it must burst in upon us as a strangely Divine instance of love that Christ should have brought us there and set us among the peers of His realm! And yet He will do it! And you, Mrs. Much-Afraid—you will be there! And you who think, “surely Satan will have me!” you will be there! You who are stumbling over every straw! You who seem stopped by every little gully in the road and who fancy, “Surely, there is no Grace in my heart.” And yet you are still holding on, “faint, yet pursuing.”

You who touch the hem of Christ’s garment, but have so little faith that you are afraid that you have none at all—you shall get up from that mourning and moaning, you shall rise from that despondency and distress—and among the sweetest music of Heaven shall be your songs of gratitude and joy! “He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.”

III. Well, now, WHAT IS THE LESSON OF THIS? I think there are three lessons and I will just hint at them. One is this—encouragement to those who are unworthy, or think themselves so, to go to Jesus Christ tonight. I have been trying to think of all I know and I have lifted up my heart to the Holy Spirit to guide me that I may cheer some discouraged one. It was my objective, last Sunday night, to comfort the broken-hearted, and I do not seem to have gotten out of that vein, yet.

I believe there are some here, whom God has sent me to, who really believe themselves to be out of the region of hope. My dear Friends, if God gathers together the outcasts, why should He not gather you? And if it is true that Jesus Christ does not look for goodness, but that He only considers our sin and misery, why should He not look upon you? May I urge you to try my Master? If you go to Him confessing your unworthiness and trusting yourself with Him, if He does not save you, I would like to know about it, because you will be the first person I have ever heard of that trusted himself with Jesus and was rejected! It will not be the case, whatever your condition may be, however desperate your state!

You think your condition to be worse than I have pictured it to be and you fancy that I cannot know anything about how bad you are. Well, I do not know your special form of rebellion, but you are the very person I mean, for all that. I say, if you are as black as Hell. If you are as foul as the Stygian bog. If you have sinned till your sins cannot be counted and if your actions are so heinous that infinite wrath is their just desert—yet come and look to those five wounds and to that sacred head once wounded, and to that heart pierced with the spear! There is life in a look at Jesus crucified! Will you try it? As surely as God’s word is true, if you do but glance your eyes at Him who “died the just for the unjust,” you shall be brought to God and reconciled!

And that now—note—while sitting in that seat, before the last word of this sermon shall be uttered, for whoever believes in Him shall be saved! “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.” O that you would believe on Jesus now! We sometimes sing—

*“Venture on Him: venture wholly.  
Let no other trust intrude.  
None but Jesus  
Can do helpless sinners good.”*

But, Sinner, it is not a venture! As surely as you cast yourself upon Him, He will be sure to save you! I will not multiply words, but I would, if I thought words would draw you. I pray the blessed and eternal Spirit to sweetly influence your minds, young people, tonight—and old people, too, and middle-aged people, too—that you may have done with trying to do anything, or to be anything in order to your own salvation, and know that it was all done when Jesus bled and died, all finished when He cried, “It is finished!” You have only to take believingly what He presents to you and accept Him as your All in All. God help you to do it!

The second reflection is this. If Jesus Christ received some of us when we felt ourselves to be outcasts, how we ought to love Him! It does us good to look back to the hole of the pit from where we were dug. We get to be very top-lofty at times, my Brothers and Sisters. We are wonderfully big, are we not? Are we not experienced Christians, now? Why, we have known the Lord these 25 years! Dear me, how important we are! And perhaps we are deacons of Churches, or, at any rate, we have a class in the Sunday school and we pray in the Prayer Meetings—considerable importance attaches to us and we are high and mighty on that account.

Ah, I have heard say of a man worth his thousands that once he had not a shirt on his back—and if he remembered what he sprang from he would not carry his head so high! I do not see much in that, but I do see something in this—that if we remembered the time when we were dead in trespasses and sins. When we had not a rag to cover us. When we were under God’s frown and were heirs of wrath even as others—if we remembered our lost and ruined state by nature—I am sure that we should not lift our heads so very loftily and want to have respect paid to us in the Church, or think that God ought not to deal so very harshly with us, as if we had cause for complaint!

Dear Friends, let us remember what we used to be, and that will keep us low in our own esteem. But, oh, how it will fire us with zeal to remember from what a depth He has lifted us up! Did Jesus save such a wretch as I was? Then for Him would I live and for Him would I die! This ought to be the utterance of us all. We ought to live in that spirit. God grant we may! Then, again, let us always feel that if the Lord Jesus Christ took us up when we were not worth having, we will never be ashamed to try and pick up others who are in the same condition. We will not count it any lowering of our dignity to go after the most fallen of all. We will reckon that they are no worse than we were, if we were viewed from a certain point, and we will, therefore, aim at their conversion, hope for it and expect it!

This lesson is peculiarly applicable to some Christians here present. Dear Brothers and Sisters, if you really feel yourselves to have been outcasts and yet have been received into the Divine family—and are now on the road to Heaven—I ask you to pay every attention to any whom you meet with who are, now, what you once were! If you meet with any in

great despair of soul, say, “Ah, I must be a comforter here, for I have gone through this. I will never let this poor soul go till, by God’s help, I have cheered him.” If you meet with one who is an open sinner, perhaps you will have to say to yourself, “I was an open sinner, too.” But if not, say, “My sins were more secret, but still they were as bad as his and, therefore, I have hope of this poor soul and will try whether he cannot be loved to Christ by me.”

Mark my expression—“ loved to Christ,” for that is the power we must use—sinners are to be loved to Christ! The Holy Spirit uses the love of saints to bring poor sinners to know the love of Christ! Search after them and do not let them perish. May God put this resolve into your soul—“If there is anything that I can do, in the name of Jesus, and with the power of the Holy Spirit upon me, that might save that soul, it shall be done and, if that soul dies lost, when I hear the passing bell I will, God helping me, be able to say, ‘I did set Christ before that soul. I did plead with that conscience. I did seek to bring that sinner to Jesus.’”

The outcast, when converted, should seek after his brother outcasts. Young man, did you ever swear? Seek the conversion of swearers! Young man, have you been fond of the card table? Have you been a frequenter of low resorts of pleasure? Then addict yourself to looking after persons of the same sort! George Whitefield says that after his own conversion his first concern was the conversion of those with whom he had taken pleasure in sin. And he had the privilege of seeing many of them brought to Christ! Have you been a man of business and have you been associated in wrongdoing with others? Seek the salvation of those who were associated with you! It is a natural obligation which Christ imposes upon all of any special sort, that they should seek those of their own sort, and labor to bring them to repentance.

May God bless you, Beloved. We shall soon be in Heaven. I can see some here tonight who, owing to their age, cannot be long before they enter the Glory of Christ. I see others of us who are younger, who do not know, from feebleness of health, how long it may be before we see the face of the Beloved. But we would say of Him tonight, what a blessed Savior He is and what an infinity of love there must be in Him to have ever revealed Himself to such as we are!

Oh, when shall we be near Him and worship Him forever and ever? Make no tarrying, O our Beloved!  
**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Psalm 147.**HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—587; 147 (SONG II.); 784. Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307.  
Sermon #2260 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

CHRIST’S HOSPITAL  
NO. 2260

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, JUNE 12, 1892. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, MARCH 9, 1890.

**“He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds. Psalm 147:3.**

OFTEN as we have read this Psalm, we can never fail to be struck with the connection in which this verse stands, especially its connection with the verse that follows. Read the two together—“He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds. He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by their names.” What condescension and grandeur! What pity and Omnipotence! He who leads out yonder ponderous orbs in almost immeasurable orbits, nevertheless, is the Surgeon of men’s souls and stoops over broken hearts! And with His own tender fingers closes up the gaping wound and binds it with the liniment of love. Think of it and if I should not speak as well as I could desire upon the wonderful theme of His condescension, yet help me by your own thoughts to do reverence to the Maker of the stars, who is, at the same time, the Physician for broken hearts and wounded spirits!

I am equally interested in the connection of my text with the verse that goes before it—“The Lord does build up Jerusalem: He gathers together the outcasts of Israel.” The Church of God is never so well built up as when it is built up with men of broken hearts. I have prayed to God in secret many a time, of late, that He would be pleased to gather out from among us a people who have a deep experience, who should know the guilt of sin, who should be broken and ground to powder under a sense of their own inability and unworthiness, for I am persuaded that without a deep experience of sin, there is seldom much belief in the Doctrines of Grace and not much enthusiasm in praising the Savior’s name. The Church needs to be built up with men who have been pulled down! Unless we know in our hearts our need of a Savior, we shall never be worth much in preaching Him. That preacher who has never been converted, what can he say about it? And he who has never been in the dungeon, who has never been in the abyss, who has never felt as if he were cast out from the sight of God, how can he comfort many who are outcasts and who are bound with the fetters of despair? May the Lord break many hearts and then bind them up, that with them He may build up the Church and inhabit it!

But now, leaving the connection, I come to the text, itself, and I desire to speak of it so that everyone here who is troubled may derive comfort from it, God the Holy Spirit speaking through it. Consider, first, the patients and their sickness—“He healed the broken in heart.” Then, consider, the Physician and His medicine and, for a while, turn your eyes to Him who does this healing work. Then, I shall want you to consider the testimonial to the great Physician which we have in this verse—“He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds.” Lastly, and most practically, we will consider what we ought to do towards Him who heals the broken in heart.

I. First, then, consider THE PATIENTS AND THEIR SICKNESS. They are broken in heart. I have heard of many who have died of a broken heart, but there are some who live with a broken heart—and who live all the better for having had their hearts broken—they live another and higher life than they lived before that blessed stroke broke their hearts in pieces.

There are many sorts of broken hearts and Christ is good at healing them all. I am not going to lower and narrow the application of my text. The patients of the great Physician are those whose hearts are broken through sorrow. Hearts are broken through disappointment. Hearts are broken through bereavement. Hearts are broken in 10,000 ways, for this is a heart-breaking world! But Christ is good at healing all manner of heartbreaks. I would encourage every person here, even though his heartbreak may not be of a spiritual kind, to make an application to Him who heals the broken in heart. The text does not say, “the spiritually broken in heart,” therefore I will not insert an adverb where there is none in the passage. Come here, you that are burdened, all you that labor and are heavy laden! Come here, all you that sorrow, be your sorrow what it may! Come here, all you whose hearts are broken, be the heartbreak what it may, for He heals the broken in heart!

Still, there is a special brokenness of heart to which Christ gives the very earliest and most tender attention. He heals those whose hearts are broken for sin. Christ heals the heart that is broken because of its sin so that it grieves, laments, regrets and bemoans itself, saying, “Woe is me that I have done this exceedingly great evil and brought ruin upon myself! Woe is me that I have dishonored God, that I have cast myself away from His Presence, that I have made myself liable to His everlasting wrath and that even now His wrath abides on me!” If there is a man here whose heart is broken about his past life, he is the man to whom my text refers. Are you heartbroken because you have wasted 40, 50, 60 years? Are you heartbroken at the remembrance that you have cursed the God who has blessed you, that you have denied the existence of Him without whom you never would have been in existence, that you have lived to train your family without godliness, without any respect to the Most High God at all? Has the Lord brought this home to you? Has He made you feel what a hideous thing it is to be blind to Christ, to refuse His love, to reject His blood, to live an enemy to your best Friend? Have you felt this? O my Friend, I cannot reach across the gallery to give you my hand, but will you think that I am doing it, for I wish to do it? If there is a heart here broken on account of sin, I thank God for it, and praise the Lord that there is such a text as this—“He heals the broken in heart.”

Christ also heals hearts that are broken from sin. When you and sin have quarreled, never let the quarrel be made up! You and sin were friends at one time, but now you hate sin and you would be wholly rid of it if you could. You wish never to sin. You are anxious to be clear of the most darling sin that you have ever indulged in and you desire to be made pure as God is pure. Your heart is broken away from its of moorings. That which you once loved you now hate. That which you once hated, you now, at least, desire to love! It is well. I am glad that you are here, for to you is sent the text, “He heals the broken in heart.”

If there is a brokenhearted person anywhere about, many people despise him. “Oh,” they say, “he is melancholy. He is mad, he is out of his mind through religion!” Yes, men despise the broken in heart, but such, O God, You will not despise! The Lord looks after such and heals them.

Those who do not despise them, at any rate avoid them. I know some few friends who have long been of a broken heart and when I feel rather dull, I must confess that I do not always go their way, for they are apt to make me feel more depressed. Yet would I not get out of their way if I felt that I could help them. Still, it is the nature of men to seek the cheerful and the happy and to avoid the brokenhearted. God does not do so—He heals the broken in heart. He goes where they are and He reveals Himself to them as the Comforter and the Healer.

In a great many cases people despair of the brokenhearted ones. “It is no use,” says one, “I have tried to comfort her, but I cannot do it.” “I have wasted a great many words,” says another, “on such and such a friend, and I cannot help him. I despair of his ever getting out of the dark.” It is not so with God! He heals the broken in heart. He despairs of none. He shows the greatness of His power and the wonders of His wisdom by fetching men and women out of the lowest dungeon wherein despair has shut them!

As for the brokenhearted ones, themselves, they do not think that they can ever be converted. Some of them are sure that they never can—they wish that they were dead—though I do not see what they would gain by that. Others of them wish that they had never been born, though that is a useless wish now. Some are ready to rush after any new thing to try to find a little comfort, while others, getting worse and worse, are sitting down in sullen despair. I wish that I knew who these were—I would like to come round and say to them, “Come, Brother. There must be no doubting and no despair tonight, for my text is gloriously complete and is meant for you! ‘He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds.’” Notice that 5th verse, “Great is our Lord, and of great power; His understanding is infinite.” Consequently, He can heal the broken in heart! God is glorious at a dead lift! When a soul cannot stir, or help itself, God delights to come in with His Omnipotence and lift the great load—and set the burdened one free!

It takes great wisdom to comfort a broken heart. If any of you have ever tried it, I am sure you have not found it an easy task. I have given much of my life to this work and I always come away from a desponding one with a consciousness of my own inability to comfort the heartbroken and cast-down. Only God can do it. Blessed be His name that He has arranged that one Person of the Sacred Trinity should undertake this office of Comforter, for no man could ever perform its duties. We might as well hope to be the Savior as to be the Comforter of the heartbroken! Efficiently and completely to save or to comfort must be a Divine work. That is why the Divine Holy Spirit heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds with infinite power and unfailing skill.

II. Now, secondly, we are going to consider THE PHYSICIAN AND HIS MEDICINE—“He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds.” Who is this that heals the broken in heart?

I answer that Jesus was anointed of God for this work. He said, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted.” Was the Holy Spirit given to Christ in vain? That cannot be! He was given for a purpose which must be answered and that purpose is the healing of the brokenhearted. By the very anointing of Christ by the Holy Spirit, you may be sure that our Physician will heal the broken in heart!

Further, Jesus was sent of God on purpose to do His work—“He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted.” If Christ does not heal the brokenhearted, He will not fulfill the mission for which He came from Heaven. If the brokenhearted are not cheered by His glorious life and the blessings that flow out of His death, then He will have come to earth for nothing! This is the very errand on which the Lord of Glory left the bosom of the Father to be veiled in Human clay, that He might heal the broken in heart—and He will do it!

Our Lord was also educated for this work. He was not only anointed and sent, but He was trained for it. “How?” you ask. Why, He had a broken heart, Himself, and there is no education for the office of Comforter like being placed where you, yourself, have need of comfort, so that you may be able to comfort others with the comfort wherewith you have been comforted of God! Is your heart broken? Christ’s heart was broken. He said, “Reproach has broken My heart; and I am full of heaviness.” He went as low as you have ever been and deeper than you can ever go. “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” was His bitter cry. If that is your agonized utterance, He can interpret it by His own suffering. He can measure your grief by His grief. Broken hearts, there is no healing for you except through Him who had a broken heart Himself! You disconsolate ones, come to Him! He can make your heart happy and joyous by the very fact of His own sorrow and the brokenness of His own heart. “In all our afflictions He was afflicted.” He was tempted in all points like as we are.” “A Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief.” For a broken heart, there is no physician like He!

Once more, I can strongly recommend my Lord Jesus Christ as the Healer of broken hearts because He is so experienced in the work. Some people are afraid that the doctor will try experiments upon them, but our Physician will only do for us what He has done many times before. It is no matter of experiment with Him—it is a matter of experience. If you knock, tonight, at my great Doctor’s door, you will, perhaps, say to Him, “I am the strangest patient, my Lord, that ever came to You.” He will smile as He looks at you and He will think, “I have saved hundreds like you.” Here comes one who says, “That first man’s case was nothing compared with mine! I am about the worst sinner who ever lived.” And the Lord Jesus Christ will say, “Yes, I saved the worst man that ever lived long ago—and I keep on saving such as he. I delight to do it.” But here comes one who has a curious odd way of brokenheartedness. He is an out-of-the-way fretter. Yes, but my Lord is able to “have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way.” He can lay hold of this out-of-the-way one, for He has always been saving out-of-the-way sinners! My Lord has been healing broken hearts well near 1,900 years! Can you find a brass plate anywhere in London telling of a physician of that age? He has been at the work longer than that, for it is not far off 6,000 years since He went into this business! And He has been healing the broken in heart ever since that time.

I will tell you one thing about Him that I have on good authority, that is, He never lost a case yet! There never was one who came to Him with a broken heart but He healed him. He never said to one, “You are too bad for me to heal.” But He did say, “Him that comes to Me, I will in no wise cast out.” My dear Hearer, He will not cast you out! You say, “You do not know me, Mr. Spurgeon.” No, I do not, and you have come here, tonight, and you hardly know why you are here—only you are very low and very sad. The Lord Jesus Christ loves such as you are, you poor, desponding, doubting, desolate, disconsolate one! Daughters of sorrow, sons of grief, look here! Jesus Christ has gone on healing broken hearts for thousands of years and He is well up in the business! He understands it by experience, as well as by education. He is “mighty to save.” Consider Him! Consider Him and the Lord grant you Grace to come and trust Him even now!

Thus I have talked to you about the Physician for broken hearts. Shall I tell you what His chief medicine is? It is His own flesh and blood! There is no cure like it. When a sinner is bleeding with sin, Jesus pours His own blood into the wound—and when that wound is slow in healing, He binds His own Sacrifice about it. Healing for broken hearts comes by the Atonement—Atonement by Substitution—Christ suffering in our place. He suffered for everyone who believes in Him and he that believes in Him is not condemned and never can be condemned, for the condemnation due to him was laid upon Christ! He is clear before the bar of justice as well as before the Throne of Mercy! I remember when the Lord put that precious ointment upon my wounded spirit. Nothing ever healed me until I understood that He died in my place—died that I might not die! And now, today, my heart would bleed itself to death were it not that I believe that He, “His own Self, bore our sins in His own body on the tree.” “With His stripes we are healed,” and with no medicine but this atoning Sacrifice! A wonderful heal-all is this, when the Holy Spirit applies it with His own Divine power and lets life and love come streaming into the heart that was ready to bleed to death!

III. My time flies too quickly, so, thirdly, I want you to consider THE TESTIMONIAL TO THE GREAT PHYSICIAN which is emblazoned in my text. It is God the Holy Spirit who, by the mouth of His servant, David, bears testimony to this congregation, tonight, that the Lord Jesus heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds! If I said it, you need no more believe it than I need believe it if you said it! One man’s word is as good as another’s if we are truthful, but this statement is found in an Inspired Psalm. I believe it—I dare not doubt it, for I have proven its truth.

I understand my text to mean this— He does it effectually. As I said last Thursday night, if there is a person cast down or desponding within 20 miles, he is pretty sure to find me out. I laugh, sometimes, and say, “Birds of a feather flock together,” but they come to talk to me about their despondency and, sometimes, they leave me half desponding in the attempt to get them out of their sadness! I have had some very sad cases, lately, and I am afraid that when they went out of my room, they could not say of me, “He heals the broken in heart.” I am sure that they could say, “He tried his best. He brought out all the choice arguments he could think of to comfort me.” And they have felt very grateful. They have come back, sometimes, to thank God that they have been a little bit encouraged, but some of them are frequent visitors—and I have been trying to cheer them up by the month together!

But, when my Master undertakes the work, “He heals the broken in heart,” He not only tries to do it, He does it! He touches the secret sources of the sorrow and takes the spring of the grief away. We try our best, but we cannot do it. You know it is very hard to deal with the heart. The human heart needs more than human skill to cure it. When a person dies and the doctors do not know the reason why he died, they say, “It was heart disease.” They did not understand his malady—that is what that means. There is only one Physician who can heal the heart, but, glory be to His blessed name, “He heals the broken in heart.” He does it effectually.

As I read my text, I understand it to mean He does it constantly. “He heals the broken in heart.” Not merely, “He healed them years ago,” but He is doing it now. “He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds.” What? At this minute? Ten minutes to eight? Yes, He is doing this work now! “He heals the broken in heart.” And when the service is over and the congregation is gone, what will Jesus be doing then? Oh, He will still be healing the broken in heart! Suppose this year, 1890, should run out and the Lord does not come to Judgment—what will He be doing then? He will still be healing the broken in heart! He has not used up His ointments. He has not exhausted His patience. He has not, in the least degree, diminished His power! He still heals.

“Oh dear!” one says, “If I had come to Christ a year ago, it would have been well with me.” If you come to Christ tonight, it will be well with you, for, “He heals the broken in heart.” I do not know who was the inventor of that idea of “sinning away the Day of Grace.” If you are willing to have Christ, you may have Him! If you are as old as Methuselah—and I do not suppose that you are older than he was—if you want Christ, you may have Him! As long as you are out of Hell, Christ is able to save you! He is going on with His old work. Because you are just past 50, you say the die is cast. Because you are past 80, you say, “I am now too old to be saved.” Nonsense! He heals, He heals, He is still doing it! “He heals the broken in heart.”

I go further than that and say that He does it invariably. I have shown you that He does it effectually and constantly—and He does it invariably. There never was a broken heart brought to Him that He did not heal! Do not some brokenhearted patients go out at the back door, as my Master’s failures? No, not one! There never was one yet that He could not heal! Doctors are sometimes obliged, in our hospitals, to give up some persons and say that they will never recover. Certain symptoms have proved that they are incurable. But, despairing one, in the Divine Hospital, of which Christ is the Physician, there never was a patient of His who was turned out as incurable! He is able to save to the uttermost. Do you know how far that is—“to the uttermost?” There is no going beyond “the uttermost,” because the uttermost goes beyond everything else, to make it the uttermost! “He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him.” Where are you, Friend “Uttermost”? Are you here tonight? “Ah,” you say, “I wonder that I am not in Hell.” Well, so do I, but you are not, and you never will be if you cast yourself on Christ! Rest in the full Atonement that He has made, for He always heals without any failure! “He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds.”

As I read these words, it seems to me that He glories in doing it. He said to the Psalmist, by the Holy Spirit, “Write a Psalm in which you shall begin with Hallelujah, and finish with Hallelujah. And set in the middle of the Psalm, as one of the things for which I delight to be praised, that I heal the broken in heart.” None of the gods of the heathen were ever praised for this! Did you ever read a song to Jupiter, or to Mercury, or to Venus, or to any of them, in which they were praised for binding up the broken in heart? Jehovah, the God of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the God and Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—is the only God who makes it His boast that He binds up the broken in heart! Come, you big, black sinner! Come, you desperado! Come, you that have gone beyond all measurement in sin! You can all glorify God more than anybody else by believing that He can save even you! He can save you and put you among the children! He delights to save those that seemed farthest from Him.

IV. This is my last point—consider WHAT WE OUGHT TO DO. If there is such a Physician as this and we have broken hearts, it goes without saying that, first of all, we ought to resort to Him. When people are told that they have an incurable disease, a malady that will soon bring them to their grave, they are much distressed. But if, somewhere or other, they hear that the disease may be cured, after all, they say, “Where? Where?” Well, perhaps it is thousands of miles away—but they are willing to go if they can. Or the medicine may be very unpleasant or very expensive—but if they find that they can be cured, they say, “I will have it.” And if anyone came to their door and said, “Here it is! It will heal you and you can have it for nothing and as much as you want of it,” there would be no difficulty in getting rid of any quantity of the medicine so long as we found people sick!  
Now, if you have a broken heart tonight, you will be glad to have Christ. I had a broken heart once and I went to Him and He healed it in a moment and made me sing for joy! Young men and women, I was about 15 or 16 when He healed me. I wish that you would go to Him, now, while you are yet young. The age of His patients does not matter. Are you younger than fifteen? Boys and girls may have broken hearts—and old men and old women may have broken hearts— but they may come to Jesus and be healed! Let them come to Him, tonight, and seek to be healed.  
When you are about to go to Christ, possibly you ask, “How shall I go to Him?” Go by prayer. One said to me, the other day, “I wish that you would write me a prayer, Sir.” I said, “No, I cannot do that, go and tell the Lord what you need.” He replied, “Sometimes I feel such a great need that I do not know what it is I need! And I try to pray, but I cannot. I wish that somebody would tell me what to say.” “Why,” I said, “the Lord has told you what to say! This is what He has said—‘Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously.’” Go to Christ in prayer with such words as those, or any others that you can get. If you cannot get any words, tears are just as good, and rather better! And groans and sighs and secret desires will be acceptable with God.  
But add faith to them. Trust the Physician. You know that no ointment will heal you if you do not put it on the wound. Oftentimes when there is a wound, you want something with which to strap the ointment on. Faith straps on the heavenly heal-all! Go to the Lord with your broken heart and believe that He can heal you! Believe that He alone can heal you and trust Him to do it! Fall at His feet and say, “If I perish, I will perish here. I believe that the Son of God can save me and I will be saved by Him! But I will never look anywhere else for salvation. ‘Lord, I believe; help You my unbelief!’” If you have come as far as that, you are very near the Light of God! The great Physician will heal your broken heart before very long. Trust Him to do it now!  
When you have trusted in Him and your heart is healed, and you are happy, tell others about Him. I do not like my Lord to have any tongue-tied children. I do not mean that I would want you all to preach. When a whole Church takes to preaching, it is as if the whole body were a mouth and that would be a vacuum! I want you to tell others, in some way or other, what the Lord has done for you, and be earnest in endeavoring to bring others to the great Physician. You all remember, therefore I need not tell you again, the story that we had about the doctor at one of our hospitals, a year or two ago. He healed a dog’s broken leg and the grateful animal brought other dogs to have their broken legs healed. That was a good dog—some of you are not half as good as that dog! You believe that Christ is blessing you, yet you never try to bring others to Him to be saved! That must not be the case any longer. We must excel that dog in our love for our species and it must be our intense desire that if Christ has healed us, He should heal our wife, our children, our friends, our neighbors—and we should never rest till others are brought to Him!  
Then, when others are brought to Christ, or even if they will not be brought to Him, be sure to praise Him. If your broken heart has been healed and you are saved, and your sins forgiven, praise Him! We do not sing half enough. I do not mean in our congregations, but when we are at home. We pray every day. Do we sing every day? I think that we should. Matthew Henry used to say about family prayer, “They that pray do well; they that read and pray do better; they that read and pray and sing do best of all.” I think that Matthew Henry was right. “Well, I have no voice,” says one. Have you not? Then you never grumble at your wife. Your never find fault with your food. You are not one of those who make the household unhappy by your evil speeches. “Oh, I do not mean that!” No, I thought you did not mean that. Well, praise the Lord with the same voice that you have used for complaining!  
“But I could not carry a tune,” says one. Nobody said you were to do so. You can at least sing as I do. My singing is of a very peculiar character. I find that I cannot confine myself to one tune. In the course of a verse I use half-a-dozen tunes—but the Lord, to whom I sing, never finds any fault with me. He never blames me because I do not keep this tune or that. I cannot help it. My voice runs away with me and my heart, too! But I keep on humming something or other by way of praising God’s name. I would like you to do the same. I used to know an old Methodist and the first thing in the morning, when he got up, he began singing a bit of a Methodist hymn. And if I met the old man during the day, he was always singing. I have seen him in his little workshop, with his lap stone on his knee, and he was always singing and beating with his hammer. When I said to him, once, “Why do you always sing, dear Brother?” He replied, “Because I always have something to sing about.”  
That is a good reason for singing! If our broken hearts have been healed, we have something to sing about in time and throughout eternity! Let us begin to do so to the praise of the glory of His Grace, who “heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds.” God bless all the broken hearts that are in this congregation tonight, for Jesus’ sake! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON  
**Psalm 147.**

This is one of the Hallelujah Psalms. It begins and ends with, “Praise you the LORD.” May our hearts be in tune, that we may praise the Lord while we read these words of praise!

Verse 1. Praise you the LORD—It is not enough for the Psalmist to do it, himself. He needs help in it, so he says, “Praise you the LORD.” Wake up, my Brothers! Bestir yourselves, my Sisters! Come, all of you, and unite in this holy exercise! “Praise you the LORD.”

1. For it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely. When a thing is good, pleasant, and comely, you have certainly three excellent reasons for attending to it. It is not everything that is good—but here you have a happy combination of goodness, pleasantness, and comeliness. It will do you good to praise God. God counts it good and you will find it a pleasant exercise. That which is the occupation of Heaven must be happy employment. “It is good to sing praises unto our God.” “It is pleasant” and certainly nothing is more “comely” and beautiful, and more in accordance with the right order of things than for creatures to praise their Creator—and the children of God to praise their Father in Heaven.

2. The LORD does build up Jerusalem. Praise His name for that. You love His Church—be glad that He builds it up. Praise Him who quarries every stone and puts it upon the one Foundation that is laid, even Jesus.

2. He gathers together the outcasts of Israel. Praise Him for that. If you were once an outcast and He has gathered you, give Him your special personal song of thanksgiving.

3. He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds. Praise Him for that, you who have had broken hearts! If He has healed you, surely you should give Him great praise.

4. He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by their names. He who heals broken hearts counts the stars and calls them by their names, as men call their servants, and send them on their way. Praise His name! Can you look up at the starry sky at night without praising Him who made the stars and leads out their host?

5. Great is our Lord, and of great power: His understanding is infinite. Praise Him, then. Praise His greatness, His almightiness, His infinite wisdom. Can you do otherwise? Oh, may God reveal Himself so much to your heart that you shall be constrained to pay Him willing adoration!

6. The LORD lifts up the meek. What a lifting up it is for them, out of the very dust where they have been trod down by the proud and the powerful! The Lord lifts them up. Praise Him for that.

6. He casts the wicked down to the ground. Thus He puts an end to their tyranny and delivers those who were ground beneath their cruel power. Praise His name for this, also. Excuse me that I continue to say to you, “Praise you the Lord,” for, often as I say it, you will not praise Him too much—and we need to have our hearts stirred up to this duty of praising God which is so much neglected. After all, it is the praise of God that is the ultimatum of our religion. Prayer does but sow—praise is the harvest! Praying is the end of preaching and praising is the end of praying. May we bring to God much of the very essence of true religion and that will be the inward praise of the heart!

7. Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our Go. “Unto our God.” How that possessive pronoun puts a world of endearment into the majestic word, “God!” “This God is our God.” Come, my Hearer, can you call God your God? Is He, indeed, yours? If so, “Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God.”

8. Who covers the Heaven with clouds, who prepares rain for the earth, who makes grass to grow upon the mountains. They did not talk about the “law of Nature” in those days. They ascribed everything to God. Let us do the same! It is a poor science that pushes God farther away from us instead of bringing Him nearer to us. HE covers the Heaven with clouds! HE prepares the rain for earth! HE makes the grass to grow upon the mountains!

9. He gives to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry. Our God cares for the birds and the beasts. He is as great in little things as in great things. Praise you His name! The gods of the heathen could not have these things said of them, but our God takes pleasure in providing for the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. The commissariat of the universe is in His hand! “You open Your hands and satisfy the desire of every living thing.”

10, 11. He delights not in the strength of the horse: He takes not pleasure in the legs of a man. The LORD takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy. Kings of the olden times rejoiced in the muscles and sinews of their soldiers and their horses, but God has no delight in mere physical strength. He takes pleasure in spiritual things, even in the weakness which makes us fear Him—even that weakness which has not grown into the strength of faith and yet hopes in His mercy. “The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy.”

12. Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise your God, O Zion. Let whole cities join together to praise God! Shall we live to see the day when all London shall praise Him? Shall we, ever, as we go down these streets with their multitudes of inhabitants, see the people standing in the doorways and asking, “What must we do to be saved?” Shall we ever see every house with anxious enquirers in it, saying, “Tell us, tell us, how can we be reconciled to God?” Pray that it may be so! In Cromwell’s day, if your went down Cheapside at a certain hour of the morning, you would find every blind drawn, for the people were all at family prayer. There is no street like that in London today! In those glorious Puritan times there was domestic worship everywhere—and the people seemed brought to Christ’s feet. Alas, it was but an appearance in many cases—and they soon turned back to their own devices! Imitating the Psalmist, let us say, “Praise the Lord, O London; praise your God, O England!”

13. For He has strengthened the bars of your gates; He has blessed your children within you. As a nation, we have been greatly prospered, defended and supplied. And the Church of God has been made to stand fast against her enemies and her children have been blessed.

14, 15. He makes peace in your borders, and fills you with the finest of the wheat. He sends forth His Commandment upon earth: His Word runs very swiftly. Oriental monarchs were very earnest to have good post arrangements. They sent their decrees upon swift camels. They can never be compared with the swiftness of the purpose of God’s decree. “His Word runs very swiftly.” Oh, that the day would come when over all the earth, God’s Writ should run, and God’s written Word should come to be reverenced, believed, and obeyed!

16. He gives snow like wool. Men say, “it” snows. But what “it” is it that snows? The Psalmist rightly says of the Lord, “HE gives snow.” They say that according to the condition of the atmosphere, snow is produced. But the Believer says, “He gives snow like wool.” It is not only like wool for whiteness, but it is like it for the warmth which it gives.

16. He scatters the hoar frost like ashes. The simile is not to be easily explained, but it will often have suggested itself to you who, in the early morning, have seen the hoar frost scattered abroad.

17. He casts forth His ice like morsels: who can stand before His cold? None can stand before His heat, but when He withdraws the fire and takes away the heat, the cold is equally destructive! It burns up as fast as fire would. “Who can stand before His cold?” If God is gone, if the Spirit of God is taken away from His Church, or from any of you, who can stand before His cold? The deprivation is as terrible as if it were a positive infliction. “Who can stand before His cold?”

18. He sends out His Word, and melts them; He causes His wind to blow, and the waters flow. The frozen waters were hard as iron. The south wind touches them and they flow again. What can God not do? The great God of Nature is our God. Let us praise Him! Oh, may our hearts be in a right key tonight to make music before Him!

19. He shows His Word unto Jacob, His statutes unto Israel. This is something greater than all His wonders in Nature. The God of Nature is the God of Revelation! He has not hidden His Truth away from men. He has come out of the eternal secrecies and He has showed His Word, especially His Incarnate Word, unto His people. Let His name be praised!

20. He has not dealt so with any nation. Or, with any other nation. He revealed His statutes and His judgments to Israel, and since their day, the spiritual Israel has been privileged in like manner—“He has not dealt so with any nation.”

20. And as for His judgments, they have not known them. Even today there are large tracts of country where God is not known. If we know Him, let us praise Him.

20. Praise you the LORD. Hallelujah! The Psalm ends upon its keynote—“Praise you the LORD.” So may all our lives end! Amen. HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—386, 537, 587.  
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HEALING FOR THE WOUNDED  
NO. 53

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON SABBATH MORNING, NOVEMBER 11, 1855, BY THE REV. C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT NEW PARK STREET CHAPEL, SOUTHWARK.

**“He heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds.” Psalm 147:3.**

The next verse finely declares the power of God. “He tells the number of the stars. He calls them all by their names.” Perhaps there is nothing which gives us a nobler view of the greatness of God than a contemplation of the starry heavens, when by night we lift up our eyes and behold Him who has created all these things. When we remember that He brings out their host by number, calls them all by their names and that by the greatness of His power not one fails, then, indeed, we adore a mighty God and our soul naturally falls prostrate in reverential awe before the Throne of Him who leads the host of Heaven and marshals the stars in their armies! But the Psalmist has here placed another fact side by side with this wondrous act of God. He declares that the same God who leads the stars, who tells the number of them and calls them by their names, heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds! The next time you rise to some idea of God by viewing the starry floor of His magnificent temple above, strive to compel your contemplation to this thought—that the same mighty hand which rolls the stars along, puts liniments around the wounded heart—that the same Being who spoke the worlds into existence and now impels those ponderous globes through their orbits, does, in His mercy, cheer the wounded and heal the broken in heart!

We will not delay you by a preface, but will come at once to the two thoughts. First, here is a great ill—a broken heart. And secondly, a great mercy—“He heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds.”

Man is a double being—he is composed of body and soul—and each of the portions of man may receive injury and hurt. The wounds of the body are extremely painful and if they amount to a breaking of the frame, the torture is singularly exquisite. Yet God has, in His mercy, provided means whereby wounds may be healed and injuries repaired. The soldier who retires from the battlefield knows that he shall find a hand to extricate the shot and certain ointments and liniments to heal his wounds. We very speedily care for bodily diseases. They are too painful to let us slumber in silence and they soon urge us to seek a physician or a surgeon for our healing. Oh, if only we were as much alive to the more serious wounds of our inner man! If we were as deeply sensible of spiritual injuries, how earnestly would we cry to “the Beloved Physician”—and how soon would we prove His power to save! Stabbed in the most vital part by the hand of our original parent and, from head to foot disabled by our own sin, we yet remain as insensible as steel—careless and unmoved— because though our wounds are known, they are not felt! We would count that soldier foolish who would be more anxious to repair a broken helmet than an injured limb. Are not we even more to be condemned when we give precedence to the perishing fabric of the body and neglect the immortal soul? You, however, who have broken hearts, can no longer be insensible. You have felt too acutely to slumber in indifference! Your bleeding spirit cries for consolation—may my glorious Master give me words in season for you! We intend to address you upon the important subject of broken hearts and the great healing provided for them.

I. Let us commence with THE GREAT ILL—a broken heart. What is it? We reply there are several forms of a broken heart. Some are what we call naturally broken and some are spiritually so. We will occupy a moment by mentioning certain forms of this evil, naturally considered. And verily our task would be a dreary one if we were called upon to witness one tenth of the misery endured by those who suffer from a broken heart!

There have been hearts broken by desertion. A wife has been neglected by a husband who was once the subject of her attachment and whom even now she tenderly loves. Scorned and despised by the man who once lavished upon her every token of his affection, she has known what a broken heart means. A friend is forsaken by one upon whom he leaned, to whose very soul he was knit, so that their two hearts had grown into one. He feels that his heart is broken, for the other half of himself is severed from him. When Ahithophel forsakes David, when the kind friend unto whom we have always told our sorrows, betrays our confidence, the consequence may possibly be a broken heart. The desertion of a man by his fellows, the ingratitude of children to their parents, the unkindness of parents to their children, the betrayal of secrets by a comrade, the changeableness and fickleness of friends—along with other modes of desertion which happen in this world—have brought about broken hearts. We know not a more fruitful source of broken hearts than disappointment in the objects of our affections—to find that we have been deceived where we have placed our confidence. It is not simply that we leaned upon a broken reed and the reed has snapped—that were bad enough—but in the fall, we fell upon a thorn which pierced our heart to its center! Many have there been who have gone to their graves not smitten by disease, not slain by the sword—but with a far direr wound than the sword could ever give, a more desperate death than poison could ever cause! May you never know such agony.

We have also seen hearts broken by bereavement. We have known tender wives who have laid their husbands in the tomb and who have stood by the grave until their very heart did break for solitary anguish. We have seen parents bereaved of their beloved offspring, one after another. And when they have been called to hear the solemn words, “earth to earth, dust to dust, ashes to ashes,” over the last of their children, they have turned away from the grave, bidding adieu—longing for death and abhorring life! To such the world becomes a prison—cheerless, cold, unutterably miserable. The owl and bittern seem, alone, to sympathize with them and anything of joy in the whole world appears to be but, intended, as a mockery to their misery. Divine Grace, however, can sustain them even here!

How frequently might this be supposed to occur to our brave countrymen engaged in the present war? Do not they feel, and acutely feel, the loss of their comrades? You will, perhaps, imagine that the slaughter and death around them prevent the tender feelings of nature. You are enough mistaken if you so dream! The soldier’s heart may never know fear, but it has not forgotten sympathy! The fearful struggle around renders it impossible to pay the usual court and homage at the gates of sorrow, but there is more of real grief, oftentimes, in the hurried midnight funeral than in the flaunting pageantry of your pompous processions. Were it in our power to walk among the tents, we would find abundant need to use the words of our text by way of cordial to many a warrior who has seen all his chosen companions fall before the destroyer!

Oh you mourners! You who seek a balm for your wounds—let me proclaim it unto you—you are not ignorant of it, I trust, but let me apply that in which you already place your confidence. The God of Heaven knows your sorrows, repair to His Throne and tell your simple tale of woe! Then cast your burden on Him. He will bear it! Open your heart before Him—He will heal it! Think not that you are beyond hope. You would be if there were no God of Love and Pity, but while Jehovah lives, the mourner need not despair!

Poverty has also contributed its share to the number of the army of misery. Pinching need, a noble desire to walk erect without the crutch of charity, and inability to obtain employment have, at times, driven men to desperate measures. Many a goodly cedar has withered for lack of moisture and so has many a man pined away beneath the deprivations of extreme poverty. Those who are blessed with sufficiency can scarcely guess the pain endured by the sons of need—especially if they have once been rich. Yet O child of suffering, be patient—God has not passed you over in His Providence. Feeder of sparrows, He will also furnish you with what you need! Sit not down in despair—hope on, always hope! Take up arms against a sea of troubles and your opposition shall yet end your distresses. There is One who cares for you. One eye is fixed on you, even in the home of your destitution. One heart beats with pity for your woes and an Omnipotent hand shall yet stretch out to you the needed help! The dark cloud shall yet scatter itself in its season—the blackest gloom shall have its morning! He, if you are one of His family, with hands of Grace will bind up your wounds and heal your broken heart!

Multiplied, also, are the cases where disappointment and defeat have crushed the spirits. The soldier fighting for his country may see the ranks broken, but he will not be broken in heart as long as there remains a single hope for victory. His comrade reels behind him and he, himself, is wounded, but with a shout, he cries, “On! On!” and scales the ramparts. Sword in hand, he still goes carrying terror among the foe, himself sustained by the prospect of victory. But let him once hear the shout of defeat where he hoped for triumph. Let him know that the banner is stained in the earth, that the eagle has been snatched from the standard. Let him once hear it said, “they fly, they fly!” Let him see the officers and soldiers flying in confusion—let him be well assured that the most heroic courage and the most desperate valor are of no use—then his heart bursts under a sense of dishonor! Then he is almost content to die because the honor of his country has been tarnished and her glory has been stained in the dust. Of this the soldiers of Britain know but little—may they speedily carve out a peace for us with their victorious swords! Truly in the great conflict of life we can bear anything but defeat. Toils on toils would we endure to climb a summit, but if we must die before we reached it—that were a brokenness of heart, indeed! To accomplish the objective on which we have set our minds, we would spend our very heart’s blood. But once let us see that our life’s purpose is not to be accomplished—let us, when we hoped to grasp the crown, see that it is withdrawn, or other hands have seized it—then comes brokenness of heart. But let us remember, whether we have been broken in heart by poverty or by defeat, that there is a hand which “binds up the broken in heart and heals all their wounds.” Even these natural breakings are regarded by Jehovah, who, in the plentitude of His mercy, gives a balm for every wound to each of His people! We need not ask, “Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?” There is a balm! There is a Physician who can heal all these natural wounds, who can give joy to the troubled countenance, take the furrow from the brow, wipe the tear from the eyes, remove the agitation from the bosom—and calm the heart now swelling with grief. He “heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds.”

But all that we have mentioned of woe and sorrow which the natural heart endures, is not sufficient to explain our text. The heart broken not by distress or disappointment, but on account of sin, is the heart which God peculiarly delights to heal. All other sufferings may find a fearful center in one breast, and yet the subject of them may be unpardoned and unsaved. But if the heart is broken for sin by the Holy Spirit, salvation will be its ultimate issue and Heaven its result! At the time of regeneration, the soul is subject to an inward work, causing considerable suffering at the time. This suffering does not continue after the soul has learned the preciousness of a Savior’s blood, but while it lasts, it produces an effect which is never forgotten in later life! Let none suppose that the pains we are about to describe are the constant companions of an heir of Heaven during his entire existence. They are like the torture of a great drunkard at the time of his reformation, rendered necessary, not by the reformation, but by his old habits. So this broken heart is felt at the time of that change of which the Bible speaks, when it says, “Except a man be born-again he cannot see the Kingdom of God.” The fruit of the Spirit is afterwards joy and peace, but for a season we must, if saved, endure much mental agony.

Are any of you at the present moment disturbed in mind and vexed in spirit because you have violated the commands of God? And are you anxious to know whether these feelings are tokens of genuine brokenness and contrition? Hear me, then, while I briefly furnish you with tests whereby you may discern the truth and value of your repentance.

1. We cannot conceive it possible that you are broken in heart if the pleasures of the world are your delight. We may consent to call you amiable, estimable and honorable, even, should you mix somewhat in the amusements of life—but it would be a treason to your common sense to tell you that such things are consistent with a broken heart! Will any venture to assert that yon gay reveler has a broken heart? Would he not consider it an insult, should you suggest it? Does that libidinous song, now defiling the air, proceed from the lips of a broken-hearted sinner? Can the fountain, when filled with sorrow, send forth such streams as these? No, my Friends, the wanton, the libidinous, the rioting and the profane are too wise to lay claim to the title of broken-hearted persons, seeing that their claim would be palpably absurd! They scorn the name as mean and paltry—unworthy of a man who loves free living and counts religion cant.

But should there be one of you so entirely deceived by the evil spirit as to think yourself a partaker in the promises, while you are living in the lusts of the flesh, let me solemnly warn you of your error! He who sincerely repents of sin will hate it and find no pleasure in it. And during the season when his heart is broken, he will loathe to detestation, the very approach of evil! The song of mirth will then be as a dirge in his ear—“As he that pours vinegar upon niter, so is he that sings songs to a sad heart.” If the man who makes merry with sin is broken-hearted, he must be a prince of hypocrites, for he pretends to be worse than he is! We know right well that the wounded spirit requires other cordials than this world can afford. A soul disturbed by guilt must be lulled to a peaceful rest by other music than carnal pleasures can afford. The tavern, the house of vice and the society of the profligate are no more to be endured by a contrite soul than the jostling of a crowd by a wounded man!

2. Again, we will not, for one moment, allow that a self-righteous man can have a broken heart. Ask him to pray and he thanks God that he is every way correct. What need has he to weep because of the iniquity of his life, for he firmly believes himself to be well-deserving and far enough removed from guilt! He has attended his religious duties, he is exceedingly strict in the form of his devotions. Or if he cares not for such things, he is, at any rate, quite as good as those who do! He was never in bondage to any man but can look to Heaven without a tear for his sin. Do not conceive that I am painting an imaginary case, for there are, unfortunately, too many of these proud self-exalting men. Will they be angry with me when I tell them that they are no nearer Heaven than those whom we reproved a few moments ago? Or will they not be equally moved to wrath if I were so much as to hint that they need to be broken in heart for their sin? Nevertheless, such is the case, and Pharisees shall one day learn with terror that self-righteousness is hateful to God!

But what is a broken heart? I say, first, that a broken heart implies a very deep and poignant sorrow on account of sin. A broken heart—think of that. If you could look within and see everything going on in this great mystery called man, you would marvel at the wonders thereof. But how much more astonished would you be to see its heart, not merely divided in two, but split into atoms! You would exclaim, “What misery could have done this? What a heavy blow must have fallen here!” By nature, the heart is of one solid piece, hard as a nether millstone. But when God smites it, it is broken to pieces in deep suffering. Some will understand me when I describe the state of the man who is feeling a sorrow for sin. In the morning he bends his knees in prayer, but he feels afraid to pray. He thinks it is blasphemy for him to venture near God’s Throne! And when he does pray at all, he rises with the thought—“God cannot hear me, for He hears not sinners.” He goes about his business and is perhaps a little diverted. But at every interval, the same black thought rolls upon him—“You are condemned already.” Mark his person and appearance. A melancholy has rested upon him. At night he goes home, but there is little enjoyment for him in the household. He may smile, but his smile ill conceals the grief which lurks underneath. When again he bends the knees, he fears the shadows of the night. He dreads to be on his bed, lest it should be his tomb! And if he lies awake, he thinks of death, the second death—damnation and destruction! If he dreams, he dreams of demons and flames of Hell. He wakes, again, and almost feels the torture of which he dreamed. He wishes in the morning it were evening—and at evening it were night. “I loathe my daily food,” he says. “I care for nothing for I have not Christ! I have not mercy, I have not peace.” He has set off running on the road to Heaven and he puts his fingers in his ears and will hear of nothing else. Tell him of a ball or concert—it is nothing to him. He can enjoy nothing! You might put him in a Heaven and it would be a Hell to him! Not the chants of the redeemed, not the hallelujahs of the glorified, not the hymns of flaming cherubs would charm woe out of this man as long as he is the subject of a broken heart.

Now I do not say that all must have the same amount of suffering before they arrive at Heaven. I am speaking of some who have this especial misery of heart on account of sin. They are utterly miserable. As Bunyan has said, “they are considerably tumbled up and down in their souls”— and conceive that, “as the Lord their God lives, there is but a step between themselves and eternal death.” Oh, blessings on the Lord forever! If any of you are in that condition, here is the mercy. Though this wound is not provided for in any earthly pharmacy—though there are found no physicians who can heal it, yet, “He heals the broken in heart and binds up their wounds.” It is a blessing to have a broken heart, after all!

Again—when a man has a broken heart, he not only feels sorrow for sin, but he feels himself utterly unable to get rid of it. He who believes himself able to save himself, has never known the meaning of a broken heart. Those who imagine that reformation can atone for the past—or secure righteousness for the future—are not yet savingly brought to know themselves. No, my Friends, we must be humbled in the dust and made to look for all in Christ, or else we shall be deceived, after all! But are you driven out of yourself? Are you like the wounded soldier crying for someone else to carry you to the hospital of mercy and longing for the aid of a mightier than yourself? Then be of good cheer, there shall be found a great deliverance for you! So long as you trust in ceremonies, prayers or good works, you shall not find eternal Grace. But when stripped of all strength and power, you shall gain a glorious salvation in the Lord Jesus! If morality can join the pieces of a broken heart, the cement shall soon cease to bind and the man shall again be as vile as ever. We must have a new heart and a right spirit, or vain will be all our hopes!

Need I give any other description of the character I desire to comfort? I trust you are discovered. Oh, my poor Brothers and Sisters, I grieve to see you in distress, but there is pardon through Jesus—there is forgiveness even for you! What? Though your sins lie like a millstone on your shoulders, they shall not sink you down to Hell! Arise! He, my gracious Lord, calls you! Throw yourself at His feet and lose your griefs in His loving and cheering words! You are saved if you can say—

*“A guilty, weak and helpless worm  
On Christ’s kind arms I fall.  
He is my strength and righteousness,  
My Jesus and my All.”*

II. We have spoken a long time on the great ill of a broken heart. Our second thought will be the GREAT MERCY—“He heals the broken in heart.”

First, He, only, can do it. Men may alleviate suffering, they may console the afflicted and cheer the distressed, but they cannot heal the broken in heart, nor bind up their wounds! It is not human eloquence, or mortal wisdom. It is not the oration of an Apollos, nor the wondrous words of a prince of preachers. It is the “still small voice” of God which alone confers the “peace which passes all understanding.” The binding of the heart is a thing done immediately by God, oftentimes without any instrumentality whatever! But when instrumentality is used, it is always in such a way that the man does not extol the instrument, but renders grateful homage to God. In breaking hearts, God uses man continually— repeated fiery sermons and terrible denunciations break men’s hearts. But you will bear me witness when your hearts were healed— only God did it! You value the minister that broke your heart. But it is not often that we ascribe the healing to any instrumentality whatever! The act of Justification is generally apart from all means— only God does it. I know not the man who uttered the words that were the means of relieving my heart—“Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth.” I do not remember what he said in the sermon and I am sure I do not care to know. I found Jesus then and there. And that was enough for me! When you get your wounds healed, even under a minister, it seems as if it were not the minister who spoke. You never heard him speak like it in all your life before. You say, “I have often heard him with pleasure, but he has outdone himself. Before, he spoke to my ears, but now to my heart.” We are, some of us, rejoicing in the liberty of Christ and walking in all the joy of the Spirit. But it is to God we owe our deliverance and we are grateful neither to man nor book, so much as to the Great Physician who has taken pity on us. Oh that Jesus would walk through this Bethesda now! Oh, poor sick, dying man, does guilt weigh heavy on your soul? Turn not to any helper but to Him that sits on the Throne!

Then He only can do it. I defy any of my Brothers to bind up a broken heart. I have often labored to do it, but could never effect it. I have said a word to console the mourner, but I have felt that I have done but little, or have, perhaps, put the wrong mixture in the cup. Only HE can do it! Some of you seek mercy through Baptism, or the Lord’s Supper, or regular attendance at the House of Prayer. Some of you, again, have certain forms and observances to which you attach saving value. As the Lord lives, NONE of these things bind up the broken in heart apart from the Holy Spirit! They are empty wind and air. You may have them and be lost! You can have no peace and comfort unless you have immediate dealings with God, who alone, as the Great Physician, heals the broken in heart! Ah, there are some of you who go to your ministers with broken hearts and say, “What shall I do?” I have heard of a preacher who told his anxious hearer, “You are getting melancholy, you had better go to such-and-such a place of amusement. You are getting too dreary and melancholy by half.” Oh, to think of a nurse in a hospital administering poison, when she ought to be giving the true medicine! If he deserves to be hung, who mixes poison with his drugs, how much more guilty is that man who tells a soul to seek for happiness where there is none—who sends it to a carnal world for joy when there is no joy to be found except in God?

Then again, God only may do it. Suppose we could heal your broken heart? It would be good for nothing. I do beseech the Lord that I may never get a broken heart healed, except it is by God. A truly convinced sinner will always rather keep his heart broken than have it healed wrongly. I ask you who are suffering whether you would not rather keep your broken heart as it is, than allow a bad physician to cure it for you and so deceive you and send you to Hell, at last? I know your cry is, “Lord, let me know the worst of my case. Use the knife. Do not be afraid of hurting me! Let me feel it all. Cut the proud flesh away rather than let it remain.” But there are not a few who get their wounds glossed over by some pretended good works or duties. Oh, my Hearer, let no man deceive you! Be not content with a name to live while you are really dead. Bad money may pass on earth, but genuine gold, alone, will be received in Heaven. Can you abide the fire?

In vain your presumption! When God shall come to examine you, you will not pass muster unless you have had a real healing from His hand! It is easy enough to get religious notions and fancy yourselves safe, but a real saving work is the work of God and God, alone! Seek not to the priest—he may console—but it is by deluding you! Seek not to your own self—you may soothe yourself into the sleep of Hell! See that your heart is washed in the blood of Jesus. Be careful that the Holy Spirit has His temple in it and may God, of His great and Sovereign Grace, look to you that you deceive not yourself!

But next, God will do it. That is a sweet thought. “He heals the broken in heart.” He WILL do it! Nobody else can, nobody else may, but He will! Is your heart broken? He WILL heal it, He is sure to heal it, for it is written—and it can never be altered, for what was true 3,000 years ago, is true now—“He heals the broken in heart.” Did Saul of Tarsus rejoice after three days of blindness? Yes, and you, also, shall be delivered! Oh, it is a theme for eternal gratitude that the same God who, in His loftiness and Omnipotence stooped down in olden times to soothe, cherish, relieve and bless the mourner, is even now taking His journeys of mercy among the penitent sons of men! Oh, I beseech Him to come where you are sitting and put His hand inside your soul—and if He finds, there, a broken heart, to bind it up! Poor Sinner, breathe your wish to Him, let your sigh come before Him, for, “He heals the broken in heart.” There you lie wounded on the plain. “Is there no physician?” you cry! “Is there none?” Around you lie your fellow sufferers, but they are as helpless as yourself. Your mournful cry comes back without an answer and space, alone, hears your groan. Ah, the battlefield of sin has one kind Visitor. It is not abandoned to the vultures of remorse and despair. I hear footsteps approaching! They are the gentle footsteps of Jehovah! With a heart full of mercy, He is hastening to His repenting child. In His hands there is no thunder, in His eyes no anger, on His lips no threat—look how He bows Himself over the mangled heart! Hear how He speaks, “Come, now, and let us reason together, says the Lord; though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” And if the patient dreads to look in the face of the mighty Being who addresses him, the same loving mouth whispers, “I, even I, am He that blots out your transgressions for My name’s sake.” Look how He washes every wound with sacred water from the side of Jesus! Mark how He spreads the ointment of forgiving Grace and binds around each wound the fair white linen, which is the righteousness of saints. Does the mourner faint under the operation? He puts a cordial to his lips, exclaiming, “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” Yes, it is true—most true—neither dream nor fiction, “HE HEALS THE BROKEN IN HEART AND BINDS UP THEIR WOUNDS.”

How condescending is the Lord of Heaven, to thus visit poor forlorn man! The Queen has kindly visited the hospitals of our soldiers to cheer, by her royal words, her loyal defenders. By this she has done herself honor and her soldiers love her for it. But when the God of the whole earth, the Infinite Creator, stoops to become Servant to His creatures— can you conceive the majestic condescension which bows itself in mercy over the miserable heart and with loving fingers closes the gaping wounds of the spirit? Oh, sin-sick Sinner! The King of Heaven will not despise you, but you, too, shall find Him your Comforter, who heals all your diseases! Mark, moreover, how tenderly He does it. You remember that passage in the Psalms, “Loving kindness and tender mercies”? God’s mercies are “tender mercies.” When He undertakes to bind up the broken in heart, He always uses the softest liniment. He is not like your army surgeon who hurries along and says, “A leg off here, an arm off there.” But He comes gently and sympathizing. He does not use roughness with us. But with downy fingers He puts the wound together and lays the plaster on. Yes, He does it in such a soft and winning way that we are full of wonder to think He could be so kind to such unworthy ones!

Then He does it securely, so that the wound cannot open again. If He puts on His plaster, it is Heaven’s court plaster and it never fails. If He heals, He heals effectually. No man who is once saved of God shall ever be lost! If we receive mercy by faith, we shall never lose it. When God heals once, He heals forever! Although some who teach false doctrine do assert that children of God may be lost, they have no warrant in Scripture, nor in experience, for we know that He keeps the saints. He who is once forgiven cannot be punished. He who is once regenerated cannot perish. He who is once healed shall never find his soul sick unto death. Blessings on His name, some of us have felt His skill and have known His mighty power! And were our hearts broken, now, we would not stop a moment, but go at once to His feet and we would cry, “O, You who bind the broken in heart, bind ours! You who heals wounds, heal ours, we beseech You.”

And now, my Hearers, a parting word with you. Are you careless and ungodly? Permit me to speak with you. Is it true that after death there is a judgment? Do you believe that when you die, you will be called to stand before the bar of God? Do you know that there is a Hell of eternal flame appointed for the wicked? Yes—you know and believe all this—and yet you are going down to Hell thoughtless and unconcerned—you are living in constant and fearful jeopardy of Hell’s fires—without a friend on the other side the grave! Ah, how changed will your note be soon. You have turned away from rebuke, you have laughed at warning, but laughter will then give place to sighs and your singing to yells of agony! Think about it, my Brothers and Sisters, before you again place your life in peril. What will you do if your soul is required of you? Can you endure the terrors of the Almighty? Can you dwell in everlasting burnings? Were your bones of iron and your ribs of brass, the sight of the coming judgment would make you tremble! Forbear, then, to mock at religion. Cease to blaspheme your Maker, for remember, you will soon meet Him face to face—and how will you then account for your insults heaped upon His patient Person? May the Lord yet humble you before Him!

But I am seeking the distressed and I am impatient to be the means of his comfort. It may be my words are now sounding in the ears of one of my weary, wounded fellow countrymen. You have been a long time tossing on the bed of languishing and the time for thought has been blessed to your soul by God. You are now feeling the guilt of your life and are lamenting the sins of your conduct. You fear there is no hope of pardon, no prospect of forgiveness—and you tremble lest death should lead your guilty soul unforgiven before its Maker. Hear, then, the Word of God! Your pains for sins are God’s work in your soul! He wounded you that you may seek Him. He would not have showed you your sin if He did not intend to pardon you! You are now a sinner and Jesus came to save sinners—therefore He came to save you! Yes, He is saving you now! These strivings of soul are the work of His mercy. There is love in every blow and Grace in every stripe. Believe, O troubled one, that He is able to save you unto the uttermost and you shall not believe in vain. Now, in the silence of your agony, look unto Him who by His stripes heals you. Jesus Christ has suffered the penalty of your sins and has endured the wrath of God on your behalf. See yonder crucified Man on Cavalry and mark you that those drops of blood are falling for

 you. Those nailed hands are pierced for you and that opened side contains a heart within it, full of love to you—

*“None but Jesus! None but Jesus!*

*Can do helpless sinners good.”*  
It is simple reliance on Him which saves! The Negro slave said, “Massa, I fall flat on de promise.” So if you fall flat on the promise of Jesus, you shall not find Him fail you! He will bind up your heart and make an end to the days of your mourning. We shall meet in Heaven, one day, to sing hallelujah to the condescending Lord! Till then, may the God of all Grace be our helper. Amen.

*“The mighty God will not despise  
The contrite heart’s plea for sacrifice.  
The deep-fetched sigh, the secret groan,  
Rises accepted to the Throne.  
He meets, with tokens of His Grace,  
The trembling lip, the blushing face.  
His heart yearns when sinners pray—  
And mercy bears their sins away.  
When filled with grief, overwhelmed with shame, He, pitying heals their broken frame—  
He hears their sad complaints and spies  
His image in their weeping eyes.”*

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software.  
PRAY THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL USE THIS SERMON TO BRING MANY TO A SAVING KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS CHRIST.  
~END OF VOLUME ONE~ Sermon #672 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

THE RAVENS’ CRY

NO. 672

**DELIVERED ON SUNDAY EVENING, JANUARY 14, 1866, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“He gives to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry.” Psalm 147:9.**

I SHALL open this sermon with a quotation. I must give you, in Caryl’s own words his note upon ravens. “Naturalists tell us that when the raven has fed his young in the nest till they are well fledged and able to fly abroad, he thrusts them out of the nest and will not let them abide there, but puts them out to get their own living. Now when these young ones are upon their first flight from their nest and are little acquainted with means how to help themselves with food, then the Lord provides food for them.

“It is said by credible authorities that the raven is marvelously strict and severe in this—as soon as his young ones are able to provide for themselves, he will not fetch any more food for them. Some affirm the old ones will not suffer them to stay in the same country where they were bred, and if so, then they must wander. We say proverbially, ‘Need makes the old wife trot.’ We may say, ‘and the young ones too.’ ”

It has been, and possibly is, the practice of some parents towards their children, who, as soon as they can shift for themselves and are fit in any competency to get their bread, to turn them out of doors as the raven does his young ones out of the nest. Now, said the Lord in the text, when the young ones of the raven are in this pinch, that they are turned off, and wander for lack of meat, who, then, provides for them? “Do not I, the Lord? Do not I, who provide for the old raven, provide for his young ones, both while they abide in the nest and when they wander for lack of meat?”

Solomon sent the sluggard to the ant, and learned, himself, lessons from conies, greyhounds, and spiders! Let us be willing to be instructed by any of God’s creatures and go to the ravens’ nest tonight to learn as in a school. To the pure nothing is unclean, and to the wise nothing is trivial. Let the superstitious dread the raven as a bird of ill omen, and let the thoughtless see nothing but a winged thing in glossy black—we are willing to see more, and doubtless shall not be unrewarded if we are but teachable.

Noah’s raven brought him back no olive branch, but ours may! And it may even come to pass that ravens may bring us meat tonight as of old they fed Elijah by Cherith’s brook. Our blessed Lord once derived a very potent argument from ravens—an argument intended to comfort and cheer those of His servants who were oppressed with needless anxieties about their temporal circumstances. To such he said, “Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap, which neither have storehouse nor barn, and God feeds them. How much more are you better than the fowls?”

Following the Master’s logic—which you will all agree must have been sound, for He was never untruthful in His reasoning any more than in His statements—I shall argue tonight on this wise: Consider the ravens as they cry! With harsh, inarticulate, croaking notes they make known their needs, and your heavenly Father answers their prayer and sends them food! You, too, have begun to pray and to seek His favor—are you not much better than they? Does God care for ravens, and will he not care for you? Does He not hearken to the cries of the unfledged ravens in their nests when they are hungry and cry unto Him to be fed?

Does He, I say, supply them in answer to their cries, and will He not answer you, poor trembling children of men who are seeking His face and favor through Christ Jesus? The whole business of this evening will be just simply to work that one thought out. I shall aim tonight, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to say something to those who have been praying for mercy but as yet have not received it—who have gone on their knees, perhaps, for months, with one exceeding great and bitter cry—but as yet know not the way of peace.

Their sin still hangs like a millstone about their neck. They sit in the valley of the shadow of death. No light has dawned upon them and they are wringing their hands and moaning, “Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He shut His ear against the prayers of seeking souls? Will He be mindful of sinners’ piteous cries no more? Will penitents’ tears drop upon the earth and no longer move His compassion?” Satan, too, is telling you, dear Friends, who are now in this state of mind, that God will never hear you. That He will let you cry till you die! That you shall pant out your life in sighs and tears and that at the end you shall be cast into the Lake of Fire!

I long, tonight, to give you some comfort and encouragement. I want to urge you to cry yet more vehemently! Come to the Cross and lay hold of it, and vow that you will never leave its shadow till you find the gift which your soul covets. I want to move you, if God the Holy Spirit shall help me, so that you will say within yourselves, like Queen Esther, “I will go in unto the King, and if I perish, I perish.” And may you add to that the vow of Jacob, “I will not let You go, except You bless me!” Here, then, is the question in hand: GOD HEARS THE YOUNG RAVENS. WILL HE NOT HEAR YOU?

I. I argue that He will, first, when I remember that He hears the lowly raven cry, and that you, in some sense, are much better than a raven. The raven is but a poor unclean bird whose instant death would make no sort of grievous gap in creation. If thousands of ravens had their necks wrung tomorrow I do not know that there would be any vehement grief and sorrow in the universe about them! It would simply be a number of poor birds dead, and that would be all.

But you are an immortal soul! The raven is gone when life is over— there is no raven any longer. But when your present life is past, you have not ceased to be—you are but launched upon the sea of life—you have but begun to live forever. You will see earth’s hoary mountains crumble to nothingness before your immortal spirit shall expire! The moon shall have paled her feeble light, and the sun’s more mighty fires shall have been quenched in perpetual darkness, and yet your spirit shall still be marching on in its everlasting course—an everlasting course of misery, unless God hears your cry—

*“Oh, that truth immense,  
This mortal, immortality shall wear!  
The pulse of mind shall never cease to play;  
By God awakened, it forever throbs,  
Eternal as His own eternity!  
Above the angels, or below the fiends:  
To mount in Glory, or in shame descend—  
Mankind is destined by resistless doom.”*  
Do you think, then, that God will hear the poor bird that is and is not— is here a moment and is blotted out of existence—and will He not hear you, an immortal soul, whose duration is to be co-equal with His own? I think it surely must strike you that if He hears the dying raven He will also hear an undying man. The ancients said of Jupiter that he was not at leisure to mind little things, but Jehovah condescends to care for the least of His creatures, and even looks into birds’ nests! Will He not mercifully care for spirits who are heirs of a dread eternity?  
Moreover, I never heard that ravens were made in the image of God! But I do find that, defiled, deformed, and debased as our race is, yet originally God said, “Let Us make man in Our own image.” There is something about man which is not to be found in the lower creatures, the best and noblest of whom are immeasurably beneath the meanest child of Adam. A council was held as to the creation of man, and in his mind, and even in the adaptation of his body to assist the mind, there is a marvelous display of the wisdom of the Most High.  
Bring here the most deformed, obscure and wicked of the human race, and—though I dare not flatter human nature morally—yet there is a dignity about the fact of manhood which is not to be found in all the beasts of the field, be they what they may. Behemoth and Leviathan are put in subjection beneath the foot of man. The eagle cannot soar so high as man’s soul mounts, nor the lion feed on such royal meat as man’s spirit hungers after. And do you think that God will hear so low and so mean a creature as a raven and yet not hear you, when you are one of the race that was formed in His own image?  
Oh, think not so harshly and so foolishly of Him whose ways are always equal! I will put this to yourselves. Does not Nature itself teach that man is to be cared for above the fowls of the air? If you heard the cries of young ravens, you might feel compassion enough for those birds to give them food if you knew how to feed them. But I cannot believe that any of you would succor the birds, and yet would not fly upon the wings of compassion to the rescue of a perishing infant whose cries you might hear from the place where it was cast by cruel neglect! If, in the stillness of the night, you heard the plaintive cry of a man expiring in sickness, unpitied in the streets, would you not arise and help him?

I am sure you would if you are one who would help a raven. If you have any compassion for a raven, surely much more would you have pity upon a man! I know it is whispered that there are some simpletons who care more for houseless dogs than for houseless men and women—and yet it is far more probable that those who feel for dogs are those who care most tenderly for men. At any rate, I should feel a strong presumption in their favor if I needed aid. And do you not think that God, the All-Wise One, when He cares for these unfledged birds in the nest, will be sure also to care for you?  
Your heart says, “Yes.” Then from now on answer the unbelief of your heart by turning its own just reasoning against it. But I hear you say, “Ah, but the raven is not sinful as I am! It may be an unclean bird, but it cannot be so unclean as I am morally. It may be black in hue, but I am black with sin! A raven cannot break the Sabbath, cannot swear, cannot commit adultery! A raven cannot be a drunkard! It cannot defile itself with vices such as those with which I am polluted.”  
I know all that, Friend, and it may seem to you to make your case more hopeless, but I do not think it really does so. Just think of it for a minute. What does this prove? Why, that you are a creature capable of sinning, and, consequently, that you are an intelligent spirit living in a sense in which a raven does not live. You are a creature moving in the spirit-world! You belong to the world of souls in which the raven has no portion. The raven cannot sin, because it has no spirit, no soul. But you are an intelligent agent of which the better part is your soul. Now, as the soul is infinitely more precious than the body! And as the raven—I am speaking popularly now—is nothing but body while you are evidently soul as well as body—or else you would not be capable of sinning—I see even in that black discouraging thought some gleam of light!  
Does God care for flesh, and blood, and bones, and black feathers, and will He not care for your reason, your will, your judgment, your conscience, your immortal soul? Oh, if you will but think of it, you must see that it is not possible for a raven’s cry to gain an audience of the ear of Divine Benevolence and for your prayer to be despised and disregarded by the Most High—  
*“The insect that with puny wings,  
Just shoots along one summer’s ray.  
The flower which the breath of Spring  
Wakes into life for half a day.  
The smallest mote, the most tender hair,  
All feel our heavenly Father’s care.”*  
Surely, then, He will have respect unto the cry of the humble, and will not refuse their prayer!  
I can hardly leave this point without remarking that the mention of a raven should encourage a sinner. As an old author writes, “Among fowls He does not mention the hawk or falcon, which are highly prized and fed by princes. But He chooses that hateful and malicious bird, the croaking raven, whom no man values but as she eats up the carrion which might annoy him. Behold then, and wonder at the Providence and kindness of God, that He should provide food for the raven, a creature of so dismal a hue and of so hideous a tone—a creature that is so odious to most men, and ominous to some. There is a great Providence of God seen in providing for the ant, who gathers her meat in summer—but a greater in the raven, who, though he forgets, or is careless to provide for himself, yet God provides and lays up for him.”  
One would think the Lord should say of ravens, Let them shift for themselves or perish! No, the Lord God does not despise any work of His hands. The raven has his being from God, and therefore the raven shall be provided for by Him. Not only the fair innocent dove, but the ugly raven has his meat from God. Which clearly shows that the want of excellence in you, you black, raven-like sinner, will not prevent your cry from being heard in Heaven! Unworthiness the blood of Jesus shall remove, and defilement He shall utterly cleanse away. Only believe on Jesus, and you shall find peace!  
II. Then, in the next place, there is a great deal of difference between your cry and the cry of a raven. When the young ravens cry I suppose they scarcely know what they want. They have a natural instinct which makes them cry for food, but their cry does not, in itself, express their need. You would soon find out, I suppose, that they meant food—but they have no articulate speech—they do not utter so much as a single word! It is just a constant, croaking, craving cry and that is all.  
But you know what you need, and few as your words are, your heart knows its own bitterness and dire distress. Your sighs and groans have an obvious meaning. Your understanding is at the right hand of your hungry heart. You know that you want peace and pardon. You know that you need Jesus, His precious blood, His perfect righteousness. Now, if God hears such a strange, chattering, indistinct cry as that of a raven, don’t you think that He will also hear the rational and expressive prayer of a poor, needy, guilty soul who is crying unto Him, “God be merciful to me a sinner”? Surely your reason tells you that!  
Moreover, the young ravens cannot use arguments, for they have no understanding. They cannot say as you can—  
*“He knows what arguments I’d take  
To wrestle with my God,  
I’d plead for His own mercy’s sake,  
And for a Savior’s blood.”*  
They have one argument, namely, their dire necessity, which forces their cry from them, but beyond this they cannot go. And even this they cannot set forth in order, or describe in language. But you have a multitude of arguments ready at hand, and you have an understanding with which to set them in array and marshal them to besiege the Throne of Grace. Surely, if the mere plea of the unuttered need of the raven prevails with God, much more shall you prevail with the Most High if you can argue your case before Him and come unto Him with arguments in your mouth! Come, despairing one, and try my Lord! I do beseech you, now, let that doleful ditty ascend into the ears of mercy! Open that bursting heart and let it out in tears if words are beyond your power!  
A raven, however, I fear has sometimes a great advantage over some sinners who seek God in prayer, namely in this: young ravens are more in earnest about their food than some are about their souls. This, however, is no discouragement to you, but rather a reason why you should be more earnest than you have been. When ravens need food, they do not cease crying till they have it. There is no quieting a hungry young raven till his mouth is full, and there is no quieting a sinner when he is really in earnest till he gets his heart full of Divine mercy. I would that some of you prayed more vehemently! “The kingdom of Heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.”  
An old Puritan said, “Prayer is a cannon set at the gate of Heaven to burst open its gates.” You must take the city by storm if you would have it! You will not ride to Heaven on a featherbed. You must go on pilgrimage—there is no going to the land of Glory while you are sound asleep— dreamy sluggards will have to wake up in Hell! If God has made you to feel in your soul the need of salvation, cry like one who is awake and alive! Be in earnest! Cry aloud! Spare not! And then I think you will find that my argument will be quite fair—that in all respects a reasonable, argumentative, intelligent prayer is more likely to prevail with God than the mere screaming, chattering noise of the raven—and that if He hears such a cry as the raven’s—it is much more certain that He will hear yours. III. Remember that the matter of your prayer is more congenial to the ear of God than the raven’s cry for meat. All that the young ravens call for is food—give them a little carrion and they have done. Your cry must be much more pleasing to God’s ear, for you entreat for forgiveness through the blood of His dear Son. It is a nobler occupation for the Most High to be bestowing spiritual than natural gifts. The streams of Divine Grace flow from the upper springs. I know He is so condescending that He does not dishonor Himself even when He drops food into the young raven’s mouth, but still there is more honor about the work of giving peace, and pardon, and reconciliation to the sons of men.  
Eternal Love appointed a way of mercy from before the foundation of the world, and infinite Wisdom is engaged with boundless power to carry out the Divine design. Surely the Lord must take much pleasure in saving the sons of men! If God is pleased to supply the beast of the field, do you not think that He delights much more to supply His own children? I think you would find more congenial employment in teaching your own children than you would in merely foddering your ox, or scattering barley among the fowls at the barn door because there would be in the first work something nobler, which would more fully call up all your powers and bring out your inward self.  
I am not left here to conjecture. It is written, “He delights in mercy.” When God uses His power He cannot be sad, for He is a happy God. But if there is such a thing possible as the Infinite Deity being more happy at one time than at another, it is when He is forgiving sinners through the precious blood of Jesus. Ah, Sinner, when you cry to God you give Him an opportunity to do that which He loves most to do! He delights to forgive, to press His Ephraim to His bosom, to say of His prodigal son, “He was lost, but is found. He was dead, but is alive again.” This is more comfortable to the Father’s heart than the feeding of the fatted calf, or tending the cattle of a thousand hills.  
Since then, dear Friends, you are asking for something which will honor God far more to give than the mere gift of food to ravens, I think there comes a very forcible blow of my argumentative hammer tonight to break your unbelief in pieces! May God the Holy Spirit, the true Comforter, work in you mightily! Surely the God who gives food to ravens will not deny peace and pardon to seeking sinners. Try Him! Try Him at this moment! No, stir not! Try Him now!

IV. We must not pause on any one point when the whole subject is so prolific. There is another source of comfort for you, namely, that the ravens are nowhere commanded to cry. When they cry, their petition is unwarranted by any specific exhortation from the Divine mouth. But you have a warrant derived from Divine exhortations to approach the Throne of God in prayer!  
If a rich man should open his house to those who were not invited he would surely receive those who were invited. Ravens come without being bid to come, yet they are not sent away empty! You are commanded to come as an invited guest—how shall you be denied? Do you think you are not bid to come? Listen to this: “Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” “Call upon Me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.” “Go you into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved. He that believes not shall be damned.” “Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.” “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of the Lord Jesus.”  
These are exhortations given without any limitation as to character. They freely invite you—no, they bid you come. Oh, after this can you think that God will spurn you? The window is open, the raven flies in and the God of mercy does not chase it out! The door is open, and the Word of Promise bids you come—don’t think that He will deny you, but believe rather that He will “receive you graciously and love you freely,” and then you shall “render to Him the calves of your lips.” At any rate try Him! Try Him even now!  
V. Again, there is yet another and a far mightier argument. The cry of a young raven is nothing but the natural cry of a creature, but your cry, if it is sincere, is the result of a work of Divine Grace in your heart. When the raven cries to Heaven it is nothing but the raven’s own self that cries—but when you cry, “God be merciful to me a sinner”—it is God the Holy Spirit crying in you!  
It is the new life which God has given you crying to the source from where it came to have communion and communication with its great Original. It needs God Himself to set a man praying in sincerity and in truth! We can, if we think about it, teach our children to “say their prayers,” but we cannot teach them to “pray.” You may make a “prayerbook,” but you cannot put a grain of “prayer” into a book, for it is too spiritual a matter to be encased between leaves. Some of you, perhaps, may “read prayers” in the family. I will not denounce the practice but I will say this much of it—you may read those “prayers” for seventy years and yet you may never once pray—for prayer is quite a different thing from mere words.  
True prayer is the trading of the heart with God, and the heart never comes into spiritual commerce with the ports of Heaven until God the Holy Spirit puts wind into the sails and speeds the ship into its haven. “You must be born again.” If there is any real prayer in your heart, though you may not know the secret, God the Holy Spirit is there! Now if He hears cries that do not come from Himself, how much more will He hear those that do! Perhaps you have been puzzling yourself to know whether your cry is a natural or a spiritual one. This may seem very important, and doubtless is so—but whether your cry is either the one or the other, still continue to seek the Lord!  
Possibly you doubt whether natural cries are heard by God. Let me assure you that they are. I remember saying something on this subject on one occasion in a certain Ultra-Calvinistic place of worship. At that time I was preaching to children and was exhorting them to pray. I happened to say that long before any actual conversion I had prayed for common mercies, and that God had heard my prayers. This did not suit my good Brethren of the superfine school! And afterwards they all came round me professedly to know what I meant, but really to cavil and carp according to their nature and practice.  
“They compassed me about like bees. Yes, like bees they compassed me about!” After awhile, as I expected, they fell to their usual amusement of calling names. They began to say what rank Arminianism this was! And another expression they were pleased to honor me with, was the title of “Fullerist”—a title, by the way, so honorable that I could heartily have thanked them for appending it to what I had advanced! But to say that God should hear the prayer of natural men was something worse than Arminianism to them, if, indeed, anything could be worse! They quoted that counterfeit passage, “The prayer of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord,” which I speedily answered by asking them if they would find me that text in the Word of God, for I ventured to assert that the devil was the author of that saying, and that it was not in the Bible at all. “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination unto the Lord” is in the Bible, but that is a very different thing from the “prayer of the wicked.” And moreover there is a decided difference between the word wicked there intended and the natural man about whom we were arguing. I do not think that a man who begins to pray in any sense can be considered as being altogether among “the wicked” intended by Solomon, and certainly he is not among those who turn away their ears from hearing the Law, of whom it is written that their prayer is an abomination.  
“Well, but,” they said, “how could it be that God could hear a natural prayer?” And while I paused for a moment, an old woman in a red cloak pushed her way into the little circle round me and said to them in very forcible way, like a mother in Israel as she was, “Why do you raise this question, forgetting what God Himself has said! What is this you say, that God does not hear natural prayer? Why, doesn’t He hear the young ravens when they cry unto Him? And do you think they offer spiritual prayers?” Straightway the men of war took to their heels—no defeat was more thorough—and for once in their lives they must have felt that they might possibly err! Surely, Brethren, this may encourage and comfort you! I am not going to set you just now to the task of finding out whether your prayers are natural or spiritual—whether they come from God’s Spirit or whether they do not—because that might, perhaps, discourage you. If the prayer proceeds from your very heart, we know how it got there, though you may not. God hears the ravens, and I do believe He will hear you, and I believe, moreover, though I do not now want to raise the question in your heart, that He hears your prayer, because—though you may not know it—there is a secret work of the Spirit of God going on within you which is teaching you to pray.  
VI. But I have mightier arguments and nearer the mark. When the young ravens cry, they cry alone. But when you pray you have a mightier One than you praying with you! Hear that sinner crying, “God be merciful to me a sinner”? Hark! Do you hear that other cry which goes up with his? No, you do not hear it because your ears are dull and heavy, but God hears it. There is another voice, far louder and sweeter than the first, and far more prevalent, mounting up at the same moment and pleading, “Father, forgive them through My precious blood.”  
The echo to the sinner’s whisper is as majestic as the thunder’s peal! Never sinner prays truly without Christ praying at the same time! You cannot see nor hear Him, but never does Jesus stir the depths of your soul by His Spirit without His soul being stirred, too. Oh, Sinner, your prayer, when it comes before God, is a very different thing from what it is when it issues forth from you!  
Sometimes poor people come to us with petitions which they wish to send to some Company or great Personage. They bring the petition and ask us to have it presented for them. It is very badly spelt, very strangely written, and we can but just make out what they mean. But still, there is enough to let us know what they need. First of all we make out a fair copy for them, and then, having stated their case, we put our own name at the bottom. And if we have any interest, of course they get what they desire through the power of the name signed at the foot of the petition. This is just what the Lord Jesus Christ does with our poor prayers! He makes a fair copy of them, stamps them with the seal of His own atoning blood, puts His own name at the foot, and thus they go up to God’s Throne. It is your prayer, but oh, it is HIS prayer, too! And it is the fact of its being His prayer that makes it prevail. Now, this is a sledge hammer argument—if the ravens prevail when they cry all alone, if their poor chattering brings them what they need of themselves—how much more shall the plaintive petitions of the poor trembling sinner prevail who can say, “For Jesus’ sake,” and who can clench all his own arguments with the blessed plea, “The Lord Jesus Christ deserves it! O Lord, give it to me for His sake”?  
I do trust that these seeking ones to whom I have been speaking, who have been crying so long and yet are afraid that they shall never be heard, may not have to wait much longer but may soon have a gracious answer of peace! And if they shall not just yet get the desire of their hearts, I hope that they may be encouraged to persevere till the day of Grace shall dawn. You have a promise which the ravens have not, and that might make another argument if time permitted us to dwell upon it. Trembler, having a promise to plead, never fear but that you shall be heard at the Throne of Grace!  
And now, let me say to the sinner, in closing, IF YOU HAVE CRIED UNSUCCESSFULLY, STILL CRY ON. “Go again seven times,” yes, and seventy times seven! Remember that the mercy of God in Christ Jesus is your only hope! Cling to it, then, as a drowning man clings to the only rope within reach. If you perish praying for mercy through the precious blood, you will be the first that ever perished so! Cry on! Just cry on! But oh,

 believe, too! For believing brings the morning star and the day dawn. When John Ryland’s wife, Betty, lay dying, she was in great distress of mind, though she had been for many years a Christian. Her husband said to her in his quaint but wise way, “Well, Betty, what ails you?” “Oh, John, I am dying, and I have no hope, John!” “But, my Dear, where are you going, then?” “I am going to Hell!” was the answer. “Well,” said he, covering up his deep anguish with his usual humor, and meaning to strike a blow that would be sure to hit the nail on the head and put her doubts to speedy flight, “What do you intend doing when you get there, Betty?” The good woman could give no answer, and Mr. Ryland continued, “Do you think you will pray when you get there?”  
“Oh, John,” said she, “I should pray anywhere. I cannot help praying!” “Well, then,” said he, “they will say, ‘Here is Betty Ryland praying here. Turn her out! We won’t have anybody praying here! Turn her out!” This strange way of putting it brought light to her soul and she saw at once the absurdity of the very suspicion of a soul really seeking Christ, and yet being cast away forever from His Presence! Cry on, Soul! Cry on! While the child can cry, it lives. And while you can besiege the Throne of Mercy, there is hope for you! But hear as well as cry, and believe what you hear, for it is by believing that peace is obtained.  
But stay awhile, I have something else to say. Is it possible that you may have already obtained the very blessing you are crying after? “Oh,” you say, “I would not ask for a thing which I had already got! If I knew I had it, I would leave off crying, and begin praising and blessing God.” Now, I do not know whether all of you seekers are in so safe a state, but I am persuaded that there are some seeking souls who have received the mercy for which they are asking. The Lord, instead of saying to them tonight, “Seek you My face,” is saying, “Why cry you unto Me? I have heard you in an acceptable hour, and in an acceptable time have I succored you. I have blotted out your sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud your iniquities. I have saved you. You are Mine. I have cleansed you from all your sins. Go your way and rejoice.”  
In such a case believing praise is more suitable than agonizing prayer. “Oh,” you say, “But it is not likely that I have the mercy while I am still seeking for it.” Well, I do not know. Mercy sometimes falls down in a fainting fit outside the gate. Is it not possible for her to be taken inside while she is in the fainting fit, and for her to think all the while that she is still on the outside? She can hear the dog still barking, but ah, poor Soul, when she comes to, she will find that she is inside the wicket and is safe! So some of you may happen to have fallen into a swoon of despondency just when you are coming to Christ. If so, may Sovereign Grace restore you, and perhaps I may be the means, tonight, of doing it. What is it you are looking after? Some of you are expecting to see bright visions, but I hope you never may be gratified for they are not worth a penny a thousand. All the visions in the world since the days of miracles, put together, are but mere dreams, after all—and dreams are nothing but vanity! People eat too much supper and then dream—it is indigestion, or a morbid activity of the brain—and that is all! If that is all the evidence you have of conversion you will do well to doubt it. I pray you never to rest satisfied with it—it is wretched rubbish to build your eternal hopes upon. Perhaps you are looking for very strange feelings—not quite an electric shock, but something very singular and peculiar. Believe me, you need never feel the strange motions which you prize so highly. All those strange feelings which some people speak of in connection with conversion may or may not be of any good to them, but I am certain that they really have nothing to do with conversion so as to be at all necessary to it! I will put a question or two to you. Do you believe yourself to be a sinner? “Yes,” you say. But supposing I put that word “sinner” away? Do you mean that you believe you have broken God’s Law, that you are a goodfor-nothing offender against God’s government? Do you believe that you have in your heart, at any rate, broken all the Commandments, and that you deserve punishment accordingly? “Yes,” you say, “I not only believe that, but I feel it! It is a burden that I carry about with me daily.” Now something more—do you believe that the Lord Jesus Christ can put all this sin of yours away? Yes, you do believe that. Then, can you trust Him to save you? You need saving. You cannot save yourself. Can you trust Him to save you? “Yes,” you say, “I already do that.” Well, my dear Friend, if you really trust Jesus, it is certain that you are saved, for you have the only evidence of salvation which is continual with any of us! There are other evidences which follow afterwards, such as holiness and the Graces of the Spirit, but the only evidence that is continual with the best of men living is this*—  
“Nothing in my hands I bring,  
Simply to Your Cross I cling.*  
Can you use Jack the huckster’s verse*—  
“I’m a poor sinner and nothing at all,  
But Jesus Christ is my All in All”?*  
I hope you will go a great deal farther in experience on some points than this, by and by, but I do not want you to advance an inch farther as to the ground of your evidence and the reason for your hope. Just stop there and if now you look away from everything that is within you or without you to Jesus Christ, and trust to His sufferings on Calvary and to His whole atoning work as the ground of your acceptance before God, you are saved! You do not need anything more! You have passed from death unto life. “He that believes on Him is not condemned.” “He that believes has everlasting life.”  
If I were to meet an angel presently in that aisle as I go out of my door into my vestry, and he should say—“Charles Spurgeon, I have come from Heaven to tell you that you are pardoned,” I should say to him—“I know that without your telling me anything of the kind! I know it on a great deal better authority than yours.” And if he asked me how I knew it, I should reply, “The Word of God is better to me than the word of an angel, and He has said it—‘He that believes on Him is not condemned.’ I do believe on Him, and therefore I am not condemned—and I know it without an angel to tell me so.”  
Do not, you troubled ones, be looking after angels, and tokens, and evidences, and signs. If you rest on the finished work of Jesus you have already the best evidence of your salvation in the world! You have God’s Word for it—what more is needed? Cannot you take God’s Word? You can take your father’s word. You can take your mother’s word—why cannot you take God’s word? Oh, what base hearts we must have to suspect God Himself!  
Perhaps you say you would not do such a thing. Oh, but you doubt God, if you do not trust Christ—for, “he that believes not has made God a liar.” If you do not trust Christ, you do in effect say that God is a liar! You do not want to say that, do you? Oh, believe the truthfulness of God! May the Spirit of God constrain you to believe the Father’s mercy, the power of the Son’s blood, and the willingness of the Holy Spirit to bring sinners to Himself!  
Come, my dear Hearers, join with me in the prayer that you may be led by Divine Grace to see in Jesus all that you need—  
*“Prayer is a creature’s strength, his very breath and being. Prayer is the golden key that can open the wicket of mercy. Prayer is the magic sound that said to fate, so be it. Prayer is the slender nerve that moves the muscles of Omnipotence, Therefore, pray, O creature, for many and great are your needs. Your mind, your conscience, and your being, your needs commend you unto prayer,  
The cure of all cares, the grand panacea for all pains, Doubt’s destroyer, ruin’s remedy, the antidote to all anxieties.”*

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JUBILEE JOY—OR, BELIEVERS JOYFUL IN THEIR KING  
NO. 1968

**A SERMON DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, JUNE 19, 1887, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.”  
Psalm 149:2**

YOUR streets will ring with joyous acclamations when the Queen and court pass through them to the Abbey—and well they may! The jubilee of a good and great Queen is an event to be celebrated with enthusiasm. Our hearts are fully in accord with those who bless and praise God for His goodness to this country in giving us 50 years of the peaceful reign of Victoria.

God save the Queen! None pronounce these words with a more emphatic meaning and fervor than we do this day. We not only do not grudge our fellow countrymen all the joy they have in their Queen, but we share with them to the fullest their loyalty and gratitude. Had we known what some countries have known of tyranny, war, or anarchy, we would have a much more vivid sense of the benefits bestowed upon us through the long and happy reign of our well-beloved Sovereign. Let us take care to blend a holy gratitude to God with our fervent patriotism. Be it ours to praise and bless the God who has sent us these favors! Wishing boundless blessings upon our earthly Queen, we ascribe all her prosperity and ours to that higher King from whom all blessings flow. Religion must always sanctify loyalty. It would be idolatrous to think of the human and forget the Divine. “Why should the heathen say, Where is now their God?”

But, Brothers and Sisters, let us learn from the citizens of an earthly kingdom to rejoice in our heavenly King. Let us elevate our fervor into the higher sphere. There is another King, one Jesus and, as believers in Him, we are more truly citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem than of any city or country upon earth. Our Divine Lord has called out Believers from among the sons of men to make them a peculiar people, a nation set apart unto Himself. The text, under the term, “children of Zion,” indicates all who fear God, put their trust in Him and yield joyful service to His crown. Are we “children of Zion?” Do we glory in the one living and true God? Are we loyal to His Anointed, whom He has set as King upon His holy hill of Zion? This is the question for each man’s heart and conscience. We must be “born again” before we can be the happy subjects of the King of Kings, for He is King of a spiritual nation and by nature men are not spiritual. The carnal mind is enmity against God and to become His friends, we must receive new hearts and right spirits. We must be born into His kingdom by a heavenly birth, by the work of the Holy Spirit upon us! And the token of this new birth is a child-like faith in the Lord Jesus. Let us ask ourselves whether we have kissed the scepter of Jesus, the Anointed Son of God. Do we believe and trust in Him who is Prophet, Priest and King to His people? Is He our bosom’s Lord, sole monarch of our hearts? If so, we are called upon by the words of the text to be joyful in our King!

There have been kings in whom nobody could be joyful. They have been tyrannical, cruel, selfish—and their rule has oppressed their people. England has no such burden to bear. Under God, our forefathers delivered us from despotism and our Queen has faithfully observed those covenants which harmonize monarchy with liberty. For this may God be praised! Looking, however, to the higher sphere, we are joyful that Zion’s King is of such a sort that His government is an unmingled blessing. There are many gods whom the nations have set up over themselves, but in none of them can their votaries rejoice. The worship of these false deities is one of dread and terror—and their adoration is more fitly paid in dirges than in songs. Our God is known as, “the blessed God.” He would have His people happy and, by His Grace, He makes them so! We rejoice in our King because our King makes us rejoice! He bids us “come before Him with thanksgiving and show ourselves glad in Him with Psalms.” And we willingly do so because He is “our exceeding joy.” Blessed religion, in which happiness has become a duty! Such is the Character of our God and King, that—

*“His Nature and His works unite*

*To make His praises our delight.”*  
I pray that the Holy Spirit may shed abroad the perfume of the “oil of joy” this morning. May the beauties and glories of our King charm us into delightful praise! Away with care and sorrow! Away with doubt and despondency! Let us praise the Lord upon the loud cymbals! Let us praise Him upon the high-sounding cymbals! I pray the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, to produce in us the fragrant spikenard of holy joy—and may that holy joy, like the precious ointment of the woman who loved much—be all poured upon the Person of our Lord and King!

I. In order that we may carry out the exhortation of the text, LET US BEGIN BY FEELING THAT THE LORD JESUS IS OUR KING. Alas, many who should be of a better mind are forgetful of this Truth of God—they are not joyful in their King for they have not yet learned His sovereignty.

Brothers and Sisters, Jesus must have the pre-eminence among men, since He is in Person and Character pre-eminent. Who among the sons of the mighty can be compared unto the Lord? When the princes of the earth are gathered in their glory, who among them can be named in the same day with the Prince of Peace? Jesus is the best, therefore is He the Chief— His Person and Character wear about them a superlative majesty—let every hand present a crown to Him. “He is the standard bearer among ten thousand and the altogether lovely.” Since the Lord Jesus has no equal nor even rival, He is a born King—and were not men most blind and foolish, they would all salute Him with loyal homage. From every corner of the globe, if men were unfallen, there would arise the cry—

*“Bring forth the royal diadem  
And crown Him Lord of All.”*

Our King not merely has the power, but the right to reign—He is, in Himself, royal. As Saul, the first King of Israel, was head and shoulders above all other Israelites, so is our Lord and King higher than all others in an infinitely nobler sense, for in dignity of Nature and glory of Character He surpasses all! Let us distinctly recognize that Christ is infinitely above all others even of the saintliest, wisest and noblest. He is not one among many great teachers—He is, Himself, the Truth of God. He is not one star in a constellation, but the one Light from which all lights are kindled! As the sun, at his appearing, causes the stars to hide themselves for very shame, so does all excellence and honor veil before the superior brightness of our Lord Jesus! He alone can claim universal sovereignty by right of indisputable pre-eminence.

When we have remembered that He is thus the best and noblest, let us remember that to each Believer He is a King to be obeyed. He said, “You call Me, Master and Lord, and you say well, for so I am.” It is easy to think of Christ as a Savior and yet to forget that He is Lord—but the thought is as evil as it is easy. The doctrine of Justification by Faith alone is a most important Truth of God—it is the vital essence of the Gospel—but it must never be dissociated from the fact that He who saves us must reign over us! When His blood cleanses us, His love rules us. He saves us from our sins, thus recovering us from our rebellions and revolts into a happy loyalty which finds its delight in obedience to the Divine will. Those who would have Jesus for their Redeemer must—

*“Know, nor of the terms complain,  
Where Jesus comes, He comes to reign!  
To reign and with no partial sway,  
Lusts must be slain that disobey.”*

Do any of you accept the promises of our Lord and neglect His precepts? This is to sin against Him in a grievous manner! You proclaim yourselves rebels and yet wish to share in the pardon which He brings? Is not this to act the part of hypocrites? Is His Cross precious to you? How can it be if you turn your back on His crown? For once I will reverse a time-honored motto and say, “No crown, no Cross.” Jesus will not be your Savior if you refuse to let Him be your Sovereign! You cannot have half of your Lord. He must be to you Christ—the Anointed King—or He will not be Jesus the gracious Savior. Do not attempt to divide your Lord’s offices! The robe of Christ is without seam and if even the rough soldiers cried, “Let us not tear it,” we earnestly beg you not to tear it. Let us accept sanctification as well as justification, righteousness as well as peace, the cleansing water as well as the pardoning blood!

If we have a special joy in Jesus in any one capacity more than another, let us be joyful in Him as our King. It should be bliss to us to be subject to His holy rule! If there seems anything hard about His claim of absolute sovereignty over heart, lips and life, why, then, at the very outset we are disqualified from rejoicing in our King! Let us entreat His Spirit to bring us under the rule of Grace until we yield our members instruments of righteousness and every thought is brought into captivity to Jesus’ love. O my Brothers and Sisters, it will be Heaven to us when Jesus reigns over our entire nature as Lord of All!

Further, let us follow this thought into a region where it is much needed. Jesus is King in the midst of His Church. How often is this Truth of God overlooked! There are disputes about what ought to be believed and practiced in the Church of England and those disputes are settled by a court of law, or by reference to the Book of Common Prayer. No, Sirs, this is not according to the Kingdom of Heaven—we fear it reveals a sad disloyalty to King Jesus! Secular courts have no authority in the Kingdom of Jesus! In His realm, He is, Himself, the supreme Head and the Bible, alone, is the one law-book. Certain Christians are fond of deciding questions by the practice of the early Church, but we know no authority in the practice of any church when it quits the faith once and for all delivered to the saints! The acts of the Lord Jesus and His Apostles are precedents enough for us!

Certain churches refer to the minutes of deceased leaders, or to the decisions of councils, or to the theological systems of eminent reformers— but all this is forgetfulness of the one supreme Authority. We have no king in the Church but Christ. The crown rights of Jesus must not so much as be questioned, or all loyal hearts are wounded. I wish that with sound of trumpet we could today, again, proclaim our King. There is but one Head of the Church and that Head is Jesus Christ! There is but one law-book in the Church and that is the Holy Scripture, inspired of the Spirit of God. There is but one supreme center of unity in the Church and that is the living God, of whom and by whom and through whom are all things! The divisions and schisms of this day are mainly due to those secondary authorities within the Church which have, to a sad degree, obscured the supreme authority of our Lord. Would to God we could come back once more to “one Lord,” for then we should also come back to “one faith and one Baptism!” There can be no unity in the Church except in Jesus and in obedience to His undivided rule. It is only under the Lord’s own King that the promise shall be fulfilled—“And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all.”

The sovereignty of our Lord must be observed not only by the Church as a whole, but by each individual member of the Church. We must not go beyond our Lord’s commands. We are not legislators, but subjects. Officers of the Church are administrators of Christ’s Law under Him, but they must not be makers of laws, nor creators of doctrines, nor inventors of ceremonies. We may not amend His statutes—no, we may not cross a “t” nor dot an “i” apart from Him! Let this be sounded everywhere as with a trumpet—Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, and sole King in the midst of His people! Distinctly recognize this, or you cannot rejoice in your King.

Another Truth of God is also too much overlooked, namely, that Jesus Christ is Head over all things for His Church. His Kingdom rules over all. All power is given unto Him in Heaven and in earth. In truth, He is the blessed and only Potentate. The kings of the earth wear their crowns and sway their scepters by license from His Throne. Propose what they may, they shall only fulfill His secret purpose and will. Fear not because of the great ones of the earth, for you have as your Friend, One who is greater than all! You look at cabinets and you are distracted. You think of emperors and princes and you are bewildered as you observe the windings of their diplomatic devices. Be comforted! There is One whose counsel governs councils and whose Kingdom rules over kings! All things are committed unto Him by His Father and without Him shall not a dog move his tongue! The Father has given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as He has given Him. He has put all things under His feet. Clothed with honor and majesty, He waits till His enemies shall be made His footstool. To this thought I call your minds once again, that you may be encouraged amid the conflicts of the hour—“Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom,” even as this day He gives it to His Son.

Jesus will be seen to be King in the day of His Second Adven t. If you will listen and your ears have been opened, you may hear this day the trumpet which announces His speedy arrival. “Behold the Bridegroom comes; go you out to meet Him,” is the voice of these latter days to a Church that slumbers! Both wise and foolish virgins sleep. The midnight starts at this clarion note—“He comes! He comes!” “He shall reign in Mount Zion before His ancients gloriously.” Behold He comes as King to judge the earth in righteousness and His people with equity. “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” We are to look for this and to pray for this, saying every day in our prayers, “Your kingdom come. Your will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven; for Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever.”

O you saints, at this hour set your Lord on His throne! You have seen Him in His crimson vesture, bowing in the garden of His agony. You have seen Him “despised and rejected of men.” You have seen Him on the tree of doom. Dry your eyes. He is no more the “Man of Sorrows,” nor the “acquaintance of grief”—Heaven adores Him, He has gone up to His Throne again amid the hosannas of the angels and the hallelujahs of the redeemed! Let us praise and adore Him this day. We sang, “Crown Him, crown Him,” but we thought not of any visible pageantry—we can make no gallant show for Him! What if we could? What honor could our pomp confer on Him? He, in Himself, far transcends all the splendor that ever was devised of the intellect, or pictured by the imagination! But you can crown Him in your hearts to-day as King. Salute Him with the intense devotion of your souls. Render Him those deep-throated praises of which we read in this Psalm, if we note the margin—“Let the high praises of God be in their throats.” My soul adores the Lord Jesus and blesses Him with all her strength in fullness of delight! Let the children of Zion fully recognize their King, that they may be joyful in Him!

II. Secondly, LET US GO ON TO STUDY HIS ROYAL CHARACTER, that we may be helped to be joyful in Him. Was there ever such a Prince as our Emmanuel, if we think of His Person, His pedigree, His descent, His Nature? This King of ours is not only the flower and crown of manhood, but He is also very God of very God! He is God over all, blessed forever—the Son of the Highest! What a wondrous Nature is that of Jesus, our Lord! Perfect Manhood is, in itself, wonderful—we have never seen it and never shall see it till we are taken up to behold Him as He is. Perfect Humanity, as seen in the glorified Jesus, is the wonder of the skies! In the Character of Jesus there is neither deficiency nor redundancy—He is without spot and without lack. In Him is perfect humanity steeped in love! His life is love. He is Love! He lives as the Head of the New Covenant, as the Second Adam, the Father of the new-born race. Think of Him in that light and then link His humanity in your minds with His Godhead, without confusion of idea. In Jesus we do not see humanized Godhead, nor deified manhood, but He is distinctly God and distinctly Man, yet both of these are in one Person and must neither be confounded nor severed.

Was there ever such a King? Among the shining ones, the brightest cannot be His comrade. “To which of the angels said He at any time, You are My Son; this day have I begotten You?” Though He is reckoned among men and is thus said to be “anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows,” yet to whom else but He could it have been said, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever”? “When Jehovah brings in the First-Begotten unto the world, He says, Let all the angels of God worship Him.” Think of your king in His Person and rejoice in Him! My words fail to express my inward joy in that Divine Lord who is not ashamed to call us brethren! I sit down at His dear pierced feet, now covered with eternal light, and I feel a sweet content, yes, an overflowing joy! I see a world of wonders meeting in my Lord—Heaven come down to earth and earth raised up to Heaven— and I am joyful in my King!

We further follow our Lord joyfully as we think of His deeds of love to us. Well may we be joyful in our King, since His loving kindness to us has exceeded all bounds! The true splendor of kings lies not in what their people do for them, but in what they do for their people—and herein our Lord excels all the princes that ever lived! He took our nature and was born a Babe in Bethlehem. He did more than that, He lived among us and bore the brunt of poverty, hunger, homelessness, contempt and treachery. He died for us! Having given up for us His last garment, for they stripped Him at the Cross, He then gave up Himself! With tenderness we can each say, “He loved me and gave Himself for me.” How royal was His love when the Cross was its throne! What a crown was that which was made of thorns! What a scepter was that which was held in His pierced hand! I call this real kingship. All else is mere stage-play.

O Sovereign Love! Incarnate in Jesus, you are imperial! Behold your King! Not only does He bleed beneath the lash of man, but He also bows beneath the bruises of His Father’s justice and cries, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” I beseech you, O loyal hearts, by the bitterness of your King’s agony, be joyful in Him! It He loved you so, can you refuse to rejoice in Him? He has poured out His heart for His people that He might redeem them unto Himself—shall we not be glad in Him? Our acclamations shall all be given to Him who has proved His greatness and His goodness, not by a largess of gold, but by the gift of Himself!

When He had given this supreme proof of love, He was not yet satisfied. Having slept in the grave a while, He awoke and left His sepulcher. But He did not leave His love—He arose to meet His followers and nerve them for future service. After a while, when He had manifested Himself to them in most familiar ways, He rose to Heaven, a cloud receiving Him out of their sight! Then He changed His place, but He did not change His love. Ah, no! He went into Heaven bearing the pledges of His affection in His hands, feet and side. He entered Glory to carry on His intercession within the veil. His royal life is now spent in pleading for transgressors! All His thoughts are of His people—all His power is for His people, all His glory is in His people! I pray you, think not of my Lord and King according to the measure of my faltering speech, but joy in Him according to that love of His which passes knowledge—

*“Love which will not let Him rest  
Till His people all are blest!  
Till they all for whom He died  
Live rejoicing at His side.”*

Let us think a moment further of the glorious achievements of our King, that we may the more fully be joyful in Him. This King of ours has fought for us and won great victories on our account. Our King met the battalions of our sins in conflict. He encountered Satan, that tremendous foe. He fought hand to hand with Death itself! The shock of battle was terrible. The sun was darkened, the earth shook, even the dead arose from their sepulchers to behold the war. Our hero stood alone—“of the people there was none with Him”—yet He trampled down all our enemies as the treader of grapes crushes the clusters in the winepress. Thus He made an end of sin, broke the head of the old dragon and put Death, itself, to death and led our captivity captive! Behold He comes from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah, traveling in the greatness of His strength, mighty to save! Shall we not salute Him with hosannas? Will we not be joyful in Him? Daughters of Jerusalem, will you not go forth to meet Him, even as the maidens of old went forth to meet young David when he returned with Goliath’s head? Will you not, also, sing, “Saul has slain his thousands and David his ten thousands”? Remember how Miriam and the virgins sounded their timbrels at the Red Sea and spoke saying, “Sing unto the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously!”? In like joyous manner sing unto the Lord, your King, and magnify His name!

It should stir you to enthusiasm to think of the principles of His government, for they are fountains of peace and purity. Jesus founded His empire upon love and His own Self-Sacrifice is the corner stone of that Imperial fabric. His action is always love and His teaching is always love. As He loved us and gave Himself for us, so His golden rule is that we do to others as we would that they should do to us. This is sadly forgotten, even by some who call themselves Christians, but if this principle once took possession of men’s minds, we should have no schemes of the poor to rob the rich and no greed on the part of the rich by which they grind down the poor! If our King were obeyed, man would no longer be man’s worst enemy, but the bands of brotherhood would unite mankind in a league of mutual sympathy! If we heard our Lord say, “A new commandment I give unto you, That you love one another,” and if we practiced that commandment, what a Kingdom of Heaven should we see upon the face of the earth! Let us trust and hope and pray that it may yet be so. Oh for the time when the Shepherd King shall judge the poor and needy and break in pieces the oppressor! “He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth.” His blessed principles of truth and love should make His people joyful in Him.

I think I might appeal to every Christian here and say, you have personal reasons for being joyful in your King. You love Him because He has first loved you. He has been wondrously condescending to all His saints and to us among them. Many a time has He appeared unto us and said, “I have loved you with an everlasting love.” He has brought us into His banqueting house and His banner over us has been love. We ought to be joyful in Him for His love to others. But if not, we would be worse than brute beasts if we did not rejoice in Him for His love to ourselves. O my Brothers and Sisters, be joyful in Him! What do you know about any other king compared with what you know of King Jesus? On His bosom you have leaned and His secret is with you. He has kissed you with the kisses of His lips and His love is better than wine to you. He is your Husband. You are married unto Him and He calls you His Hephzibah and says, “My delight is in her.” “The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him, in them that hope in His mercy.” Therefore in such a condescending King, Brothers and Sisters, let the children of Zion rejoice!

III. I shall not detain you long while I touch upon a third point—LET US MARK THE BENEFITS OF HIS REIGN which entitle Him to our highest regard this day.

For, first, remember that the nation over which He reigns He has created. “Let Israel rejoice in Him that made him.” There was no Israel till God made Israel, Israel—and there was no Church over which Christ could reign till He made His own Church. He is the Father of the age in which He is King, the Creator of His own empire! Most kings inherit what other swords have won, but Jesus, Himself, with His own blood, has purchased a Kingdom to Himself! Each one of us must acknowledge for himself—and all of us together unitedly—that He has made us and not we, ourselves. By His Sovereign Grace He has chosen, redeemed, called and sanctified us! Therefore will we be joyful in Him.

Brethren, while our King has created His own Kingdom, He has also sanctified and sustained that Kingdom. That there is a Church in the world at all is due to Jesus. We had gone back to chaos and old night if it had not been that His light is never dim. He whose Sovereign Word said, “Let there be light,” still bids the light abide in the Church to lighten those who come into the world. Yes, we each of us live through Him if we live unto God. He says, “Because I live, you shall live also.” The Church as a corporate body would cease to be were He not its continual Life and Strength. Let the streams rejoice in the fountain, let the walls of the temple be joyful in the foundation! We ought to rejoice today in our King because it is He that has saved us and given us peace. In the days of Solomon, Israel had such peace that every man sat under his own vine and fig tree. But oh the peace our greater Solomon has given us! I was as restless, once, as those ever-flying birds which hover over the waters of the Golden Horn at Constantinople. They are never seen to rest and hence men call them, “lost souls.” Such was I! I found no place for the soles of my feet till I knew the Lord Jesus. My soul was a dread battlefield of conflicting thoughts, a very Esdraelon trodden by innumerable hosts of doubts and fears! But when my King came, then the enemy fled and I found rest and joy! He is our peace. Jesus has given us the true Sabbath. Crown Him, then, as Prince of Peace, you once weary spirits who now joyfully abide in Him!

But, Beloved, time fails me to speak of all the benefits our King has brought us. Is there anything that is necessary which He has not given? Is there anything that is good that He has withheld? Have we any virtue? Have we any praise? Then not unto us, not unto us, but unto His name be the glory! Nor is it alone in the past and in the present that we are debtors—we look forward to a future of obligations. He will keep us from all the power of the enemy. He will secure His Zion from invaders and fill her with the finest of wheat. Forever and ever will He preserve us and be our Guide even unto death. Again we say hallelujah, as we think how He loves unto the end!

In due time He will remove our Zion and all its inhabitants to the land of cloudless day and unwithering flowers. A little while and we shall be translated to the place where there is no more death, neither sorrow nor sighing! Our King has great things in store for His Church. His best will be last and His last will be best. Glory dwells in Emmanuel’s land! In Him we possess earth and Heaven, time and eternity. All things are ours in our King. All Heaven lies at our feet. O you chosen, lift up your eyes to the east and to the west, to the north and to the south—all this land is yours in Him who is your Lord and King! Know no boundary to your expectation, for such a King to a people so beloved will give a heritage which shall be forever—and the bliss thereof shall know no limit!

IV. Very briefly, in the next place, LET US BE JOYFUL IN THE CONTINUANCE OF OUR REDEEMER’S REIGN. Fifty years is a long time for Her Majesty to have reigned. May her days yet be many! Fifty years, as we measure life, is a long space, but 50 years in the measurement of human history is far less—and 50 years as compared with eternity is nothing! King Jesus has a Kingdom of which there shall be no end! This is our joy, that the ages past have not taken away from the length of His reign. So much the less has any king to reign as he has already reigned, but it is not so with Him, for still is the voice heard, even the same voice that made the Red Sea resound—“The Lord shall reign forever and ever, hallelujah!” Let us, this day, be right glad concerning our King, since He, only, has immortality and, therefore, He will live forever. He communicates that immortality to all His people and thus He is the undying King of an undying Kingdom! True, we shall pass through that river which is named Death, but it is a misnomer! Like the Jordan when Israel passed into Canaan, the Lord has rebuked it and it is dried up. We shall pass through the Valley of the Shadow of Death and that is all—and thus we shall reach a higher stage of being in which we shall be “forever with the Lord.” Shall not those whom the King has made to live, be joyful that their King lives and reigns world without end?

Brethren, the age of our King has not enfeebled Him. John, in vision, saw Him with His head and His hair “white like wool, as white as snow,” but to His well-beloved spouse, He is not gray with age, for she sings of Him, “His locks are bushy and black as a raven.” He is as youthful and vigorous as ever! His age is eternity and eternity has not the fretting tooth of time. He is still the same Christ—as mighty in power as when He routed the hosts of Hell! Let us be joyful in our King.

As to His kingdom, there is no fear of its failing . The gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. His kingdom is one and indivisible. And His Throne shall never be shaken. There is no dynasty to follow His dynasty; no successor to take up the crown of our Melchisedec! My immortal spirit rejoices in the hope of rendering endless homage to the eternal King. He lives and reigns and we shall find it the bliss of our endless life to serve Him day and night in His Temple! In prospect of such bliss, let us bestir ourselves to rejoice in our King with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

V. Once more, being joyful in our King, LET US OBEY HIM WITH DELIGHT. Let us weave delights into our duties. When Moses’ mother made the ark in which she placed her darling boy, she worked it in this holy fashion—she took a bulrush and a prayer and plaited them together— every bulrush had a fervent prayer twisted with it. And so the ark was made of the prayers of a mother and the rushes of the Nile. How could the child be otherwise than safe? Let us take into our hands a duty and a thanksgiving, a precept and a praise! Let us make up our whole life of the intertwisting of duty and delight. Let us be holy and happy! Let us turn obedience into gladness. That which otherwise were drudgery, we will exalt to a priestly sacrificing as we serve the Lord with gladness and rejoice before Him.

What a joy it would be to me if this midsummer morning some of you who have never trusted in this King should begin to do so! This is a high day and a day of glad tidings—the trumpets of jubilee load the air with music. Our King will forgive your former rebellions if now you turn to Him. He proclaims, today, a general amnesty to all rebels! This day He grants a jail delivery to all prisoners of hope. You who have revolted may come back again—He will receive you graciously and love you freely. He sits upon His holy hill in Zion and He cries to you, “If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land.” “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.”

It would be a joy to me, on this the day of my birth [Brother Spurgeon was born June 19, 1834] if it might also be the birthday of many a precious soul among those who hear me. Why should it not be so? The King is among us—come and adore Him! You never had such a Master as He will be to you! He will make you happy in His love! Trust Him and live forever! Oh, that some young friends would listen to this call!

Some of you have known Jesus many years and have been professors for a long time. Perhaps you are getting into rather a dull state of mind. All elder brothers have not a pleasing character—do not become like he in the parable who envied the returning prodigal. What a wretched temper he showed! He said, “Lo, these many years do I serve you, neither transgressed I at any time your commandment: and yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.” “Oh,” you say, “we are not in that state of mind.” I am glad to hear it, but lest you should, in the future, fall into that state, I would advise you to often make merry with your friends. If that elder brother had, every now and then, held a grand merrymaking with his friends, he would never have been able to make such a wretched speech! He was such a steady old plodder that he always kept to his work and never had a thought about rejoicing in his home and his father! Work without joy is not good for us. What the old proverb says concerning “all work and no play,” is true of all service and no joy. I want the children of God to hold high festival at this time! Why should not we have our Jubilee as well as others? “Praise the Lord. Sing unto the Lord a new song and His praise in the congregation of the saints.”

You have heard machinery at times complaining wretchedly—it has gone on with horrible grating and creaking. It has set your teeth on edge! Fetch the oil can! We must cure this jarring. Every now and then we need a few drops of the oil of gladness to make the wheels of our work move pleasantly. Men of the world teach us the value of joyous song. How readily the anchor rises when the sailors unite in cheery cries! Soldiers, when weary on the march, find their spirits revived when the band strikes up a stirring tune. Let it be so today. I would have you praise God with the sound of the trumpet. Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King!

“Ah, dear minister,” you say, “you do not know what state of mind we are in! You do not know all our troubles, worries, frets and weaknesses.” Do I not know? I have been in that same oven! I know the secrets of your prison house. Dear Brothers and Sisters, let us not rob our King of His revenue because all things are not quite to our mind. Are we going to blame our Lord for the chastisement which our own sins require? We are never right with God unless we feel at peace with Him, no, happy in Him! The right state of mind for a child is to be happy in his Father’s love. It was well with Israel when “whatever the King did, pleased all the people.” It is well with us when we love Jesus so that He may even do whatever He pleases with us and we will still exult in Him! May you come to this delightful state! The streams of our misery flow from the fountains of unhumbled self. When Jesus is so loved that His will is our will, then life on earth becomes like life in Heaven. Reign, O Lord, reign absolutely, for so we see our murmuring and complaining slain and these are the worst adversaries of our peace.

It is time to finish and, therefore, I would invite all that love my Lord to proclaim a Jubilee for their Lord and King. Keep it after the best fashion. Endeavor to enlighten the world! Put candles in your windows. Illuminate all your streets. Let no sinner die in the dark. Publish the love of God to men. Light up your houses, all of you, with a holy cheerfulness and a clear confession of Christ. Hang out your flags of joy! You have them lying by and the moths are eating them. Bring them out! Give the streamers of your mirth to the breeze! Tell all around you what God has done for you. Do not be ashamed to acknowledge your indebtedness to the love of God in Christ Jesus. You very retiring people, may I invite you to come out of your shells? You that have been slothful and cold of late, I pray you shake yourselves from the dust. At this time, when the pulse of the world beats fast, let yours be quickened. Begin this day something new for Jesus. I wish the Church of God would think that Christ’s Jubilee was, indeed, come, and so would kindle beacons upon every hill till all the nations beheld the great Light of God. Let the flame be seen across the sea! Let the whole earth be filled with His glory! “Arise, shine; for your light is come.” May the Divine Spirit come upon all His people at this hour and move them to show their joy in their King by special deeds of love!

Lastly, if our king were here and I were to say to Him, “How shall I close this sermon?” He would answer, “Tell them to honor Me by showing their love to the poor and needy.” Our King is glorious in His gifts to men. I told you just now that the true splendor of a king lies in what he does for his people. I trust our Queen’s Jubilee will be memorable for some illustrious deed of generosity. A great-hearted action is more worthy of acclamation than all the glitter of state! Some special gift to the poor and needy of this crowded city. Some truly royal mindfulness of the sick poor would be seasonable and commendable. I trust there will be no failure on this point, or some of us will feel that the pageant of the 21st is a vain show.

It will be the best of Jubilees if the poor are largely thought of. Let them be thought of by all of us today! Let us give largely to the hospitals for Christ’s sake! David, when he kept a high day, gave to every man a good piece of flesh and a flagon of wine—and thus sent them all home full and happy. If this cannot be done for all the poor, let it be abundantly done for the sick by our collection for the hospitals. Beds are empty from lack of funds—shall they remain so? The sick poor are languishing—will you withhold your bounty? Children of Zion, honor your King by your generous gifts at this hour!

**PORTIONS OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON— Psalm 149. and 150.**  
HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—335, 333, 417.

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OUR KING, OUR JOY  
NO. 963

**DELIVERED ON LORD’S-DAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 27, 1870, BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

**“Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.”  
Psalm 149:2.**

THE book of Psalms ends in a sacred tumult of joyous praise. There is praise all through it, though sometimes it is but a still small voice. But when you reach the concluding Psalms you hear thunders of praise! There God is praised with the sound of the trumpet and upon the high sounding cymbals. All the force and the energy of sacred minstrelsy are laid under contribution that Jehovah may be extolled. Let the Book of Psalms stand as an image of the Christian’s life. If we began with the blessing of the man who delights in the Law of the Lord. If we proceeded to obtain the blessing of the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. If our soul learned to pant for her God as the hart for the water brooks. And if we went onwards till we sang, “He crowns me with loving kindness and tender mercies,” let us not pause now, but advance to the hallelujahs of the closing pages of our book of life!

He who ends this life with praising God will begin the next life with the same delightful employment! As our latter days are nearer the land of Light, let them be fuller of song. Let us begin below the music which shall be prolonged through eternity. Like the birds, let us welcome the break of day, which faith in the close of life gladly perceives to be very near. I shall, this morning, call upon the veterans of Christ’s army to be first in the fulfillment of the duties of praise. I shall pray that those who have tasted longest that God is gracious, may utter the loudest notes of thanksgiving, so that the younger pilgrims may learn from them, and be strengthened and comforted by their joyful example.

At the same time I shall pray that all of us, whether we have been long in the Divine life or not, being citizens of the new Jerusalem, and subjects of the Prince Immanuel, may this day be joyful in our King. The time of the singing of birds is, I trust, come! Awake and sing, you who have dwelt in darkness.

I. I shall invite you to consider our text, first, by the remark that the joy to which we are here exhorted is PECULIAR TO A CERTAIN PEOPLE. “Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.” No others can be joyful in Him, no others have any reason for being so. Those who are not the children of Zion have reason for dismay at the very thought of God’s supremacy. “The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice,” is a song for saints, but remember there is another side of it—“the Lord reigns let the people tremble!” “He is angry with the wicked every day.” The glory of the Son of God can be no comfort to those who are despisers of Him, for when He shall

come, as come He will, it will be with no silver scepter in His hand for them—with no reward of Grace prepared for them—but He will come with a rod of iron to break them in pieces as potters’ vessels.

Those who are not the children of Zion cannot, therefore, rejoice in their King. He is no King to them in the sweet and gentle sense in which He is the Prince of Peace to us. His rule extends over them, but its greatest display will be one of justice, not of mercy. He will exhibit His power in executing the righteous sentence of God upon the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. And, seeing they have rejected Him, He will be the object of their deepest dread. Children of Zion, you are the people who should be joyful in our King, and there are sacred principles within you which make it certain that you will be!

The first is your loyalty. The children of Zion are loyal to their King. They delight to think that “the Lord reigns.” They are glad that He has set His King upon the holy hill of Zion. Why, if it could be put to the vote among Believers today who should be the Head of the Church, there would be but One chosen. If we were asked who should rule over us, what other name should even be mentioned in our presence but the name of Jesus our Lord and King? We are so loyal to Him that I am persuaded, though we justly fear we should deny Him if left by His Grace, yet if supported by His Spirit the most bitter pangs of torture, and the most dreadful terrors of death could not separate us from His love.

If we are His followers, come fair, come foul, come life, come death— none shall ever divide us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Prove your loyalty this day—rejoice in His Sovereign will even though He may be exercising it in a manner against which the flesh rebels. We will receive evil from His hand as thankfully as good, for that which appears evil we are well assured is good if He ordains it!

Loyal subjects do not only submit to those decrees of their Monarch which are pleasing in themselves, but they give in their unwavering adhesion to the entire administration of their King. His throne and dynasty to them are paramount, and in his actions they take delight. In the case of our great Lord and King the rule is absolute—what He commands we desire to do. What He wills we seek to will. We acquiesce in His determinations, and hope even to rejoice in the most painful of His Providences.

Christian loyalty finds music in the name, and Heaven in the Person of King Jesus. None can extol Him too much. Our hearts are never surfeited with His glories, our ears never weary of hearing His praises. His rule is so good, so kind, so loving, that no other people ever had such a monarch! Every day we elect Him afresh in our heart’s warmest love, and we sing again and again—

*“Crown Him, crown Him*

*King of kings, and Lord of lords.”*  
Zion’s citizens are something more than loyal to the Monarch, they are attached to His Person. Apart from the Throne and Crown of the Lord Jesus we feel a devout attachment to His very Person. As the Son of God, we worship Him and adore Him, and our heart reverently confides in Him.

As bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, our Brother, our Redeemer who has purchased us with His own heart’s blood, He is the Beloved of our souls. He has engrossed our warmest love, and none can rival Him. The savor of His name has oftentimes revived our fainting spirits, and a sense of His Presence has filled us with the new wine of holy exultation. He is in Himself All in All to us. His offices, His works, His honors—all these are as garments perfumed with myrrh and aloes—but He Himself is Fragrance itself!

Nothing grieves us so much as when any speak slightly of Him. Nothing so excites our indignation as when men do despite to His Cross and Crown. Our greatest joy is to hear of saved souls in whom He is glorified, to see Him revealing His healing power among the sons of men, and the sons of men acknowledging that healing power by yielding themselves to His service. We show that we are attached to the Person of our King by the joy we feel when our minds consider Him. We are joyful in Him because our love finds her center of rest, and her circle of motion in Him and Him alone.

When the children of Zion rejoice in their King, this indicates that they sink themselves in Him. What matters it to the true child of God what becomes of himself so long as his King is great and glorious, so long as the Lord Jesus rides forth prosperously in His chariot of salvation, and His name is hallowed and His kingdom comes? The citizen of Zion is content to be poor, to be unknown, or to be obscure if the Prince of the House of David is but glorified.

In the olden times the children of Zion often courted death for their Lord’s sake. They scorned to fly when the accusers sought them out. They came before the world’s judgment seat and there confessed that if it were a crime to worship the Christ, they gloried in confessing that they worshipped Him—and if the price of faithfulness to Him were death—they asked to die that they might show how truly they loved Him!

Shall we, who owe as much to our Lord as they, be less willing to deny ourselves and to resist even unto blood, striving against sin? May the Spirit dwell in us so richly that for us to live may be Christ and not self at all! May we count all things but loss for Christ’s sake! May we never pine at the hardness of our lot, or the extremity of our grief, if we are bearing hardness for Jesus’ sake. But rather may we rejoice that we are counted worthy to take part in such a cause. Loyalty, attachment to His Person, and self-abnegation all make us joyful in our King, and there must be added to these an unbroken confidence in Him.

If we suspect our King’s fidelity, or His wisdom, or His power. If we begin to think that He has made mistakes in His government, or that He has omitted us in the administration of His liberality, we shall not be able to rejoice in Him. But if we feel that Heaven and earth may pass away, but never can His love be changed. That the ordinances of Heaven might be broken, but never could His purposes and decrees fall to the ground. If we can feel that all is well and all safe in His hand, that the government is

upon His shoulders, and therefore never suffers damage. That He, with the key of the House of David opening so that no man shuts, and shutting so that no man opens, rules wisely and well in all matters—if we can feel this, we shall be devoutly joyful in our King! Put these various feelings towards our Lord Jesus together, and you have so many fountains of rejoicing in Him.

If we add to all this an intense admiration for the great King in Jeshurun, we shall not fail to rejoice. The thought of His coming down from Heaven to suffer for our sins, the remembrance of His life of holiness, and His substitutionary death of sorrow—these, I say—have won our hearts to deepest admiration. Surely there was never such a one as He, no love could be compared with His for a moment. He is to us “the chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely,” to whom all the beauties of earth are ugliness, compared with whom the brightness of the morning is but darkness. If we do, indeed, so admire Him, that we see nothing else to admire except what first of all came from Him, then joining this with confidence, and attachment, and self-denial, and loyalty, we must, we shall be joyful in our King!

I wish we had not only these Divine Graces, which like many rare spices well blended make up a holy anointing oil, but that they were so in us and did so abound that the savor of them filled all the chambers of the Church till all the household of faith were transported with delight in their King. In proportion as we become what we should be, as children of Zion, by the work of Grace within us—in that proportion we must inevitably and necessarily be a joyful people rejoicing in our King.

An old Negro who had long known and loved his Master, and who with little knowledge yet had grown much in Grace, was noted for being always happy, and therefore someone asked him why it was he always rejoiced. He said, “Because I always rejoice in God.” “Well,” said one, “but suppose your master should beat you?” “If God suffers me to be beaten I will thank Him.” “But suppose you have no food given you.” “If I have meat I will thank Him, if I have no meat I will thank Him. If I live I will thank Him, if I die I will thank Him. But I will always thank Him, for He is always a good God and deserves to be thanked.”

May we get to just that state of heart, until the excellence of our King shall be our most prominent thought, and the joy of having such a King shall outweigh every other emotion! This will be sure evidence that we are of the chosen race. By this shall we discern our pedigree and citizenship. If we are joyful in our King we are the seed which the Lord has blessed.

II. Secondly, THIS JOY HAS A MOST PROPER OBJECT. We are to be joyful in our King. And it is most fitting that we should be so. There is nothing unreasonable in the exhortation. There is no more legitimate subject for joy in the universe. First, it should be a subject of intense joy to us to be ruled by Him. His Law is perfect, His government is gentle, His yoke is easy, His burden is light. If we were ruled by another we might soon find cause for complaint. Yes, and it might reach such a point that it would be our highest duty to rebel, and cast off the tyrant.

When we were in bondage to sin, we did well to shake off the yoke of the spiritual Pharaoh. Why should the freeborn seed of Israel be slaves to tyrant lusts? To serve Jesus is to be perfectly free. No command of Christ is an imposition upon our rights, or a curtailment of our joys. We are freest when we are most obedient to Him. Whatever Christ bids us to do is for our profit as well as for His glory. If we are Christians, indeed, we do not desire to escape our Lord’s dominion, but we ask that He may more completely subject us to His delightful sway.

We would have our judgment controlled by His teaching, our affections enamored of His Person, our will subservient, no, acquiescent to His desires, and our whole selves in every thought, and word, and deed, molded by His hands. We would be to Him what the wax is to the seal. When He overcomes our raging passions, and controls our emotions and thoughts, then are we joyful in our King. Not merely as a Savior but as a King we delight in Him. We rejoice in Him, also, not only as King over us, but as Lord of All. It is always a subject for congratulation to the true Believer that Christ’s kingdom extends over all men, over all angels, over all devils— that it has pleased the Father to commit to Him all power in Heaven and in earth.

We are joyful to think that not an angel bows in the courts of Heaven who would refuse to perform the will of Jesus our Lord, and not a devil howls and bites his iron bonds in the nethermost Hell who can effectually resist the purpose of the Crucified. No powers—physical, moral, or spiritual—predominate over Christ or are apart from His sway. We are joyful in our King because of His dominion, which has no end. He is the Almighty Savior, and we will bless and praise His name—

*“Blessing, honor, glory, might,  
Are the Conqueror’s native right;  
Thrones and powers before Him fall;  
Lamb of God, and Lord of all!”*

We rejoice, too, in the power of our King and in the various displays of it. We are very weak and feeble—without Him we can do nothing. Sometimes we are much discouraged when the Gospel makes slow progress, but it is delightful to the last degree to fall back upon the thought that it might subdue the whole world tomorrow if Jesus willed it—for all power is in His hands. He can do great wonders yet, and that, too, when it seems as if the age of wonders were over. The Lord of Pentecost is mighty still to save. His arm is not shortened. Awake, O Lord, and let the arm of Your strength be made bare. Are You not the One who cut Rahab and wounded the dragon?

The enemy knows the power of Jesus’ name, and though Christ may put up His sword for awhile, it is ours with importunity to cry, “Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O Most Mighty,” for He is most mighty, still. If He should once take His bow of might and shoot forth the arrows of conviction among His foes, the battle would soon be turned, and the victory would be unto the banners of His Church. The time comes when we shall

see far greater things than our eyes have yet beheld—the future is His with glory—  
*“Kings shall fall down before Him,  
And gold and incense bring;  
All nations shall adore Him,  
His praise all people sing—  
For He shall have dominion  
Over river, sea, and shore,  
Far as the eagle’s pinion,  
Or dove’s light wing can soar.”*  
We rejoice, then, in all the triumphs He has achieved, and all the power that He has in reserve for future conquests.  
And, Brethren, do we not, this day, delight in our King’s present glory, and in the glory yet to be revealed? That He rules me is delightful! That He rules all worlds is also inspiriting. That He has power to execute His righteous will is also joyous. But oh, to think of His Glory! O you whose hearts have followed Him through the streets of Jerusalem in all His shame! O you who have stood with weeping eyes at Calvary’s foot and seen Him there in death in all its bitter pangs, let your hearts be joyful this day when you remember that He has done with the Cross and the crown of thorns! Behold Him in His Father’s courts! These dim, bleared eyes of yours cannot as yet steadily gaze upon Him face to face, but let your faith behold Him.

Like the sun in the firmament His glory flames forth! Angels and principalities, and powers are lost in the blaze of His brightness. Hear their hymns! They are all for Him. Behold them as they bow. They bow before the Lamb once slain. Unto Him that lives and was dead, and is alive forevermore, the song of cherubim and seraphim ascends. And yonder whiterobed ones, once like yourselves wrestling hard with temptation, now conquerors! What music have they but the music which they bring to Him? All harps praise and all hearts adore the King in the midst of Zion! Blessed be His name! O that I had permission to bow so near to Him as to kiss His feet!  
Would God I might but steal into the lowest seat among the general assembly and Church of the First-Born, and but for a moment gaze upon that God-like face which was stained with spittle for my sake! I would ask no higher joy than to look upon that Person once despised and rejected on my account, but now adored of angels and admired of all the saints! You, you suffering Saints, are in your shame, but think little of it, for He is in His glory. You are in your suffering, but what matters since He is in His triumph? Children of Zion, enter into this joy, and this day be joyful in your King!  
I might thus enlarge upon the Divine Object of our joy, but I will not, except to say well may we, who are the children of Zion, be joyful in our King, because of all that our King has done for us. Is it a fair city in which we dwell, in the Church of God? He built it! Every stone is His quarrying, the architecture of every pinnacle is His. Nor is there anything of good within her walls which does not bear His mark, for every good gift has come from His hand.  
Are we well clothed today? The robe of righteousness we wear was worked by Him. Every ornament of our sanctification is His royal gift. Are we satisfied at the Gospel feast? Then He Himself is our Bread. Out of the storehouses of our great Solomon come forth the fine flour and the fat things full of marrow which satisfy all those that wait at His Table. Have we a portion and a heritage? We have received it all from Him! Are we saved from the second death, are we delivered from the guilt of sin? It is all through Him!  
The old poem of one of our writers sings of the “Man of Ross,” and declares that every institution of the town told of his liberality and benevolence—you asked, “Who built this fountain?” or, “Who founded yonder school?” The one answer was, “The Man of Ross.” So surely if you ask us concerning our privileges, possessions, hopes, and enjoyments, we trace them all to Him who is the Alpha and Omega of our salvation. He elected, ordained, redeemed, called, established and built up His Church, and to Him, our Lord and King, be praise forever and ever! O children of Zion, be joyful in Him!  
III. Thus I have spoken of the persons who rejoice, and the King in whom they rejoice. We will now remind you, thirdly, that THIS JOY IS PERMANENT IN ITS SOURCE. One is very grateful to think that there is beneath the stars one joy which need never be suspended. Everything here below is uncertain. We build, as we fancy, for eternity, and find our fabric demolished in an hour. The brooks of earth are deceitful, but here is a river whose joyous floods no winter can freeze, no summer can dry up. Today our reasons for disquietude are many. You are lovers of the Gospel, and if so, I know that in this age you will see much to distress you. My heart is joyous in Christ, but it is very heavy in many respects, especially concerning the precious interests of the Truth of God and holiness.  
Look around us at this time at the numerous misuses of the doctrines of the Gospel among our ministers and leading men. First one and then another—those who seemed to be pillars are shaken like reeds in the storm. A pestilence has gone forth from which few of our Churches are free. Human intellect is adored as an idol, and in its pride it changes the teaching of the Word of God, and sets up new dogmas which the Word of God utterly rejects. If these things depress our spirits, nevertheless let us be of good courage. For if we cannot be joyful in our ministers, we will be joyful in our King!  
If the pulpit fails us, the Throne is ever filled by Him who is the Truth. And if we have to suspect the orthodoxy of one, and to know the heterodoxy of another—to see Judas here and Ahithophel there—nevertheless Judah still rules with God and is faithful with the saints. Our King abides, and His Truth endures to all generations. At times our heart is bowed down because of the backslidings revealed in the moral and spiritual characters of our Brethren. They did run well, what hindered them? They were foremost once, where are they now? They were burning with zeal— why are they now so lukewarm? Where has their ardor gone? We hoped that they would be our joy and crown, but they have gone out from us because they were not of us. Moreover, we mourn that those who are truly saints do not exhibit the spirit of Christ so manifestly as we would desire. We see among them too little earnestness, too little holy jealousy. Well, if we cannot be joyful in our fellow citizens we will be joyful in our King! When our heart is ready to break because we see so much of our labor lost, and so many tempted of Satan, turning aside, we will rejoice that the honor of our exalted King is still safe and His kingdom fails not!  
This is an age—I fear I must say it—of very general declension in spiritual things. Much profession of religion and little earnest contention for the faith. Much talk of charity but little zeal for the Truth. Much boast of high-toned piety but little vital godliness. Yet if the famine in the Church should grow worse and worse, till the faithful utterly fail, and rebuke and blasphemy abound, we must not cease to rejoice in the Lord! We, ourselves, have grave cause to complain of ourselves when we examine ourselves before the Lord. Never pray we a prayer but what we would wish to have it forgiven as well as answered. Our faith is frequently so weak that we scarcely know whether to call it faith or unbelief. As for ourselves, we are a mass of flaws and infirmities. O God, we might be very heavy if we thought only of our own personal barrenness, but we will be joyful in our King! We will sing again the royal song. There are no flaws in Him, no imperfections in our Beloved, no coldness, no turning aside in Him.  
Glory be to His name! My Brethren, you who are at work for the blessed Master, I know you do not always feel satisfied with your success. I am, myself, pining for greater harvests. I would I heard of more converts. I would be delighted to lose my eyes if I might but know that many found sight through Christ. I would welcome any affliction if I did but know that souls were being saved. But when we preach in vain and say, “Who has believed our report?” it is delightful to return unto our rest and feel, “Nevertheless, the pleasure of the Lord does prosper in His hands. He shall see of the travail of His soul.” If I cannot be joyful in my converts I will be joyful in my King!  
Many of you, perhaps, are passing through deep waters in your temporal circumstances. If you cannot be joyful in your property, be joyful in your King! Perhaps your children are not turning out as you could wish. I am sorry you should have such perplexities with those who have been the subjects of so many prayers. But if you cannot be joyful in your children, be joyful in your King! It may be you, yourself, are much afflicted in body, and you are afraid the affliction will grow more severe. Well, if your heart and flesh fail you, yet your King will not! The eternal springs are out of reach of change.  
How little does your joy depend upon the creature! Your bottle, like Hagar’s, may be dry, but yonder is the well of water which never can fail you. There is always reason for being joyful in your King! And when you come to die, and the pulse grows faint and feeble, oh, then will be the time for you more than ever to be joyful in your King, whose Face you are soon to see in all its beauty! Whose praises are to be your eternal employ! Here, then, is a joy for all God’s people, a joy that is founded in reason, grounded and bottomed in solid realities, seeing it is a joy in an immutable Christ.  
Our joy is no passing meteor, but a fixed star. When the wicked have spent their penny, our treasure will be undiminished. Jesus, our King, never changes, and never will lose His preciousness in our esteem. His name is always sweet, His fullness is always abounding, His love is always overflowing. We have always cause, even in our worst estate, to be joyful in our King. The saints shall sing aloud upon their beds.  
Let me thrust in one sentence here. I do not think it is so difficult to rejoice in our King in dark afflictions as it is to remember to rejoice in Him only in our sunniest days. Successful minister, are you rejoicing in your success? Hear Him say, “Nevertheless, rejoice not in this, but rather rejoice that your name is written in Heaven.” Successful merchant, happy parent—are you rejoicing in these outward comforts? Hold them loosely, for they are slippery things. Set small store by them, for they will soon melt away. Do not, like the Russian queen, attempt to build a palace of ice. Its brilliance is too short-lived. Hold to the Well-Beloved when the way is smooth, even as you held to Him when the path was rough. As in your adversity you found all in Him, so in your prosperity see Him in it all. IV. I will add, in the fourth place, THAT THIS JOY OF OURS, THOUGH SO PERMANENT IN ITS SOURCE, HAS CERTAIN OCCASIONS FOR ITS MORE SPECIAL DISPLAY. Jordan was always full, but it overflowed at certain seasons of the year. Our lake of joy is full now, let me pull up the sluices for a minute, that the floods of bliss may leap forth. When does a nation rejoice in its king? Well, there are two or three seasons in which nations set apart holidays to celebrate royal events. The first is at the

 coronation. Then they hang out all the flags and streamers, and adorn the streets and houses. Then all the music sounds, and the bells ring merrily, and all the pomp of the country is displayed. So let us this day be joyful in our King, for He is crowned King in our souls.  
Look back to the time when first you crowned Him in your hearts—that happy day when first you saw Atonement through His blood, and looked to Him and were saved. That coronation day will never be forgotten by you. It is to you the day of days, even as the night in which the children of Israel came up out of Egypt. Keep the record of that coronation day in your hearts. “I was forgiven, I was accepted of Him.” He stretched out His silver scepter and said, “I have pardoned your iniquity,” and because of this I called Him “My Lord, my God, my King.” My heart shall rejoice in Him whom again, today, she crowns King of my body, soul, and spirit. Another day of joy with nations is the day of the royal marriage. Did I not see you climb to the very chimney tops, crowd your windows, and line your streets when but the other day a prince brought home his spouse from afar? And should it not make our souls rejoice within us when we hear that Christ has married His Church to Himself, and taken us to be His spouse in bonds of love? Last Sunday morning’s doctrine, I hope, has not gone from your souls—“He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit,” and if anything can make the bells ring in your heart it is to feel that you are one with Jesus—by vital, indissoluble union—one with Him. Keep up the recollection of your Immanuel’s marriage in your souls, for it is your highest glory. Be faithful to your solemn marriage Covenant. Forget your kindred and your father’s house—so shall the King greatly desire your beauty, for He is your Lord—and worship Him with joy this day. People rejoice in their king, too, when he makes peace. We had rejoicings for peace some years ago, and right glad we were to hear that the treaty of peace was signed. Jesus our King is our peace. Peace with an angry God. Peace for our torturing conscience. Christ has made and signed and brought peace in—yes, He Himself is our Peace.  
Then people rejoice in their king’s victories. They hear that the royal arms have been victorious in battle. Then they make high holiday. In the olden times we read of the conduit of Cheapside running with wine instead of water on the event of some astounding victory of the English king over the French. O my Soul, when you remember Christ’s victory over sin, death, and Hell, let your ordinary emotions which are but as water turn to generous wine of joy and thankfulness and consecration. All hail! Great Lord of Heaven and earth. Long live our King!  
Take your timbrel, Miriam, and join in the song, O Israel! For the right hand of the Lord has done wonderful things! This is known in all the earth. He has led captivity captive, and ascended up on high! Rejoice, you angels, sound all your music, you spirits, who triumph with Him. Crown Him! Crown Him King of kings, and Lord of lords!  
Sometimes I have heard, and you older men remember an instance right well, that a nation rejoices when a king keeps his jubilee. If he has been king for a long unbroken period, then will they rejoice in him. But our King keeps many a jubilee. He has the dew of His youth, and yet He is the Ancient of Days, whose goings forth were of old even from everlasting. He is the ancient King of Zion. Our great Melchisedec, without beginning of days and without end of years!  
Praise His name forever and ever! There is a rejoicing in the nation, too, when the king holds his receptions, when he has reception days, when he displays his majesty to his friends, and when he rides forth in splendor. I hope it is such a day as this with many of us at this time. May you sing this morning in your hearts—  
*“The King Himself comes near,  
And feasts His saints today.  
Here we may sit and see Him here,  
And love, and praise, and pray.  
One day amidst the place  
Where my dear God has been,  
Is sweeter than ten thousand days  
Of pleasurable sin.”*

This afternoon may the King show Himself to you through the lattices, revealing Himself to you in your meditations and private prayers. In your work for Him in the school may you see His glory. May He hold His reception today, and you be presented to Him in love as the attendants of His court, feeling yourselves to be accepted in the Beloved, and partakers of His joy. So you see, though our rejoicing in our King is one perpetual festival, yet we have our high days when the light of the sun is as the light of seven days.

V. And now, to close. This being joyful in our King IS A JOY WHICH IS SURE TO HAVE PRACTICAL RESULTS. As time fails me, I will be but very brief on this point, and tell you an Eastern story. An Eastern merchant of great wealth employed a skillful workman in certain works of Oriental skill and elegance. His workman, by some means, had gradually sunk deeper and deeper in debt. Through extravagance, or loss, or many other causes, he had first fallen into a little debt, and then had borrowed, and loans and usurious interest had heaped up the amount till it was beyond hope that he should discharge it.

The man grew daily more and more depressed, and as he sank in spirit be was smitten with sickness, and the skill he once showed in his master’s service began to decline. Each product of his hand revealed less art and cunning. The hand of his art was paralyzed. Meanwhile his creditor became more exacting, and at last threatened to sell the poor man’s children as slaves, according to the Law of the land, unless the debt was paid. This weighed more heavily upon the poor man’s soul, and he worked less industriously and with decreasing skill.

At last the merchant enquired of the steward of the workroom. “Ah,” said he, “was there ever a more cunning workman and he worked most dexterously. How is it that I see now no masterpieces come from him? His fabrics are few and in the market they are lightly esteemed. Our name suffers in the bazaar. Rival traders excel me in my works.” “My lord,” said the steward, “he is daily of a sorrowful countenance and forgets to eat bread. He keeps a long and bitter fast, for he is drowned in debt to a cruel creditor, and his soul pines like the heath of the desert. And therefore his hands are slow as that of an herdsman, and his eyes as dull as that of the owl in the sunlight. Beauty has forgotten him, and art has fled from him. He declines like one sick unto death.”

“Send for him, bring him here,” said his lord. And he brought him to his chamber, “What ails you, Ali? What clouds your eyes, and chains your hands? You are not unto me as before. You were skillful as Bezalel who worked for Moses, but now you are no better than the baseborn son of an infidel mother. Is it that you are deep in debt? Behold your discharge, your debt is paid! What do you think? Will not your cunning return to your right hand?” That servant worked with a diligence never before seen! In the joy of his heart his mind became as nimble as the gazelle on the plain, and his work as precious as the pearls of the Indian gulf. The merchant found himself abundantly rewarded in his servant’s skill and toil, for having thus set his heart at rest.

Shall not it be thus with every ransomed soul to whom Jesus has brought the news of salvation? You cannot serve our King after the best sort with a downcast mind. You cannot give yourself entirely to His service unless you have the oil of joy to anoint your head! The wheels of the chariot are heavy till joy is harnessed to the car. The Lord Jesus has forgiven all your debt and given Himself to be your Joy forever, and should you not, from now on, be first in His service, manifesting an enthusiasm in His cause, a force, a power, an elasticity, an energy which otherwise you could never have felt? Joyous spirits, see to it that you keep your joy bright and clear, for you will honor your King the more.

He wants not slaves to grace His Throne—rejoicing hearts are His delight. You who are sad, pray that the King will lift up the light of His countenance upon you, so that your drooping hands and feeble knees may be strengthened. Do not let us be sad, for the Bridegroom is with us! Let us not tremble for the ark of the Lord—Dagon will fall before it yet. Though the hosts of the Lord may appear to melt away and their numbers lessen, when they are few enough to be trusted with victory, the Lord will grant it. God will reserve unto Himself the handful of men that lap, and these shall go forth and cry, “The sword of the Lord and of Gideon,” until the enemies of the Lord destroy one another.

Let not the enemy laugh us to scorn because of our trembling. But let us charge home with renewed vigor, for Truth, for God, for Christ, for the Cross, for the everlasting decrees of a sovereign God, for the majesty of the Holy Spirit who will effect those decrees in the heart of men! Let us set up our banners anew and advance to the fight! Let us strengthen ourselves in God this day and go forth to the conflict, which if it is severe, will, nevertheless most certainly yield all the more glorious a victory to Him who is our King, and to us who loyally serve Him, even as we rejoice in Him this day!

O that all were subjects of this King! Would God that those who are not reconciled to our Almighty Monarch would seek His face this morning! He will give them mercy through Jesus the Savior—may they seek it and find it. Amen.

Adapted from The C.H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software, 1.800.297.4307 Sermon #2508 Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit 1

“BEAUTIFUL FOREVER”  
NO. 2508

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S-DAY, MARCH 14, 1897. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JULY 5, 1885.

**“He will beautify the meek with salvation.”  
Psalm 149:4.**

I FIND that the text bears other interpretations. I will mention two of them. It might be read—and I think correctly—“He will beautify the

 afflicted with deliverance.” Let me speak about that meaning first of all, for it is worth retaining. God’s own people are frequently made to mourn. Their Lord takes pleasure in them, but yet, for their good, He often sends them grief. At times they are distressed and their enemies appear to triumph over them. They are brought into sore straits and burdened and surrounded with difficulties, but, though “many are the afflictions of the righteous,” “the Lord delivers him out of them all. He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken.”

The day will come, dear Friend, when your cheeks, all fouled with weeping, shall be washed and made fair to look upon. Your eyes may be weary with waiting and watching, and red with weeping, but that weeping shall endure only for a night. “Joy comes in the morning,” as surely as the morning comes after the night! Bear your sorrows bravely, for they are appointed by your Heavenly Father in supreme wisdom. Bear them joyfully, for they will bring forth to you the peaceable fruits of righteousness. You shall not be losers by your trials, you shall be gainers, and when your face has been washed by the rolling billows of the briny wave, you shall lift up your head and your countenance shall seem more beautiful than if it had not been thus submerged. You shall come up from your sorrows like the sheep from the washing in the days of the shearing. You shall be made white as snow through these very trials which now so sorely distress you. Therefore, I say, anticipate the joys of the future and let not the grief of the present quite swallow you up! Think not so much of the stormy sea that you traverse today as of the sunny shore upon which you soon shall stand, never to be tempest-tossed again!

There may be at this moment but a step between you and Heaven— you cannot tell how soon you may get away from all that worries you— you do not know how near you have come to the gate of pearl. Oh, did you know it—did you know that within a month your hands shall strike the harps of joy and wave the palm branches of victory, and the pure white raiment shall be about you, and the immortal crown shall deck your brow—did you but know all this, you would very patiently plod on through the few weeks of trial that would remain to you here! Remember that you are going Home and that your home of bliss is eternal! Therefore, comfort one another with the words of our text as they are thus rendered—“He shall beautify the afflicted with deliverance.” You shall come again rejoicing, for “the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

Another rendering of our text which also seems to be accurate, is this—“He will beautify the meek with victory.” This is a very wonderful expression. In this world, as a rule, it is not the meek who appear to get the victory—they are trod on and trod down, and a meek-spirited man is often much despised among his fellow men. Therefore, when Moses writes of himself, “The man Moses was very meek,” I do not see the least reason why he should not have written it, though many think it would have been impossible. But, indeed, in that age and now, also, it is not self-praise but rather self-humiliation to confess that you are meek! When a man is not willing to go to war when others clamor for it. When the sacred honor of this dignified country needs that we dip our spears in blood, it is with a sneer that a man is called “white-livered and meek.” And if he, himself, were to say, “Yes, I am meek,” there would be no pride in that confession, for the most of men would count that he was confessing to a weakness! Therefore I think that Moses might deliberately write, “the man Moses was very meek,” for nobody would accord him any honor for such a declaration in that age and not very much, even, in this age, for men have not yet come to value meekness as God values it, but still look upon it as a kind of cowardice. They like a man who goes about the world with his fist always doubled, ready to knock down everybody who dares to think that the braggart is not the king of all his fellows. They admire the great hero who will not have anything said or done against his superlative dignity and, although that pride is earthly, sensual, devilish, yet there are many who admire it. And when it goes by the name of “British pluck,” then, probably, “a mean-spirited man” is the mildest appellation that they give to one who is really meek!

Now, the Lord, seeing that those who are truly meek would have to battle for it, and would be persecuted, and even cast out by their fellows, has given them this gracious promise, that, “He will beautify the meek with victory.” The victory of the man who gives a kiss for a blow is not the thing desired by most men, today, but the Lord will beautify the meek with victory! The turning of the cheek, instead of rendering rafting for railing, does not appear to give the promise of victory, but the promise is true, “He will beautify the meek with victory.” In the day when our King’s white horse shall be brought forth from its stable and the meekest of all men, clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, shall ride forth at the head of the heavenly armies, the meek of the earth shall follow Him on their white horses, too, for that shall be the true triumph which Jehovah, the King of Kings, shall give to them at the last! Inasmuch as they have little victory set to their account among their fellow men, they shall have it in that Day when angels, principalities and powers shall look down with delight upon the conquest accorded to gentleness—and sing and clap their hands with holy exultation! Therefore, Beloved, bear and forbear, be gentle and lowly, remembering this blessed promise, “He will beautify the meek with victory.”

But now, taking the text as it stands in the Authorized Version, “He will beautify the meek with salvation,” there is a pretty thought which comes to me out of the position of my text, “Jehovah takes pleasure in His people: He will beautify the meek with salvation.” You remember that Jacob had 12 sons and he had a measure of love to all his offspring, so “the Lord takes pleasure in His people.” But there was one among his children whom Jacob loved better than all the rest, and that was Joseph—and how did he show his love to Joseph? It was not in a fashion that you and I would follow, but according to the Oriental method it was the correct one. Because he loved him above the rest of his sons, he adorned him with a coat of many colors. Now read the text in that sense, “He will beautify the meek with salvation.” They shall have the coat of many colors, they shall be beautified with salvation because, out of all the Lord’s people, He takes most pleasure in those who are of a meek and quiet spirit. These are most like Jesus and, inasmuch as the Father delights best in the Well-Beloved, He delights, also, in those who are most like He. He sees in them the image of the Only-Begotten and He takes special pleasure in them and beautifies them with salvation.

I shall try to speak, first, concerning the character to be aimed at, that is, meekness. Secondly, of the favor to be enjoyed—“He will beautify the meek with salvation.” And thirdly, if we have time, we shall think of the good results to be expected—the advantages which come out of being beautified with salvation.

I. First, then, let us think of THE CHARACTER TO BE AIMED AT. Who are these meek people? Who are those whom God will beautify with salvation?

I am afraid we are not all meek, perhaps not all who are God’s people have yet learned to be meek and lowly. But this is what they all ought to be and, therefore, let us hold up the perfect Law of the Lord to you that you may look into it until, by looking in it you shall be transformed into the image you desire to reach.

What is this meekness? I should say, first, with respect to our relation towards God, meekness means entire submission to the Divine will. The meek, whom God will beautify with salvation, are a people who do not quarrel with God. They have left off that pernicious habit. They do not find fault with God’s teaching. What they read in God’s Word they are willing to believe without asking any questions. They see, there, much that is mysterious, but if God conceals the meaning of it, they believe that it is to His Glory to have it concealed, and they do not attempt to pry within the veil. There is much in God’s Word that is difficult—they are not sorry for that, for there is so much more room for the exercise of their faith! They do not expect to be as God—he who could fully understand God must be, himself, a god! These meek people are satisfied to be the children of God. And as the children of a man do not expect to understand all that their father says, but are willing to believe very much which they cannot comprehend, so is it with the children of God who are meek and teachable. They open their hearts for the Lord to write His Truth thereon and they do not say, “We cannot receive this,” or, “We cannot accept that.” It is written, “All your children shall be taught of the Lord,” and it is so in a very special sense with God’s meek children—they submit themselves to His teaching.

They submit themselves to God’s chastening as well as to His teaching. If he scourges them, that scourging is no more pleasant to them than it is to others, but they do not resist the rod, but ask that it may be sanctified to them and they prepare themselves to endure all the will of God. There are some nominally Christian people who quarrel a great deal with God—some who have lost friends and they have never forgiven the Lord for taking them away—some who have become poor and they have a standing grudge against the Most High because He has dealt with them as He has done. This kind of conduct brings no good to anybody and it often causes increased suffering. The more the ox kicks against the goad, the deeper is the sharp point driven into its flesh. Our sorrows are multiplied tenfold by our rebellions! If we were not only resigned, but actually acquiescent to the Divine will, we would not smart nearly as much as we do. This, then, I take it, is part of what it is to be meek—to be perfectly submissive to Divine teaching and to Divine chastening.

If a man is truly meek, he yields himself up to all the influences of the Spirit of God. You know that if you see a cork out in the river, if there is but a tiny ripple, it moves. If there is only a breath of wind, it goes up and down at once. But if some great ship is lying there, it does not stir, it stays quite still. I daresay you think, “I want to be just as responsive to the Divine will as that cork upon the surface of the stream is to every movement of the water. I wish to be as the feather that is wafted by the breath of God whichever way He pleases. Oh, that He did but will anything, and that I did it at once! Oh, that He did but speak, yes, oh, that before He spoke, I might catch the very glance of His eyes and do what He desires!” His promise is, “I will guide you with My eye,” and He says, “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 to you.” Oh, to be so meek as to feel at once the motion of the Spirit of God upon the soul—and to yield oneself to it, as the plastic clay that can be molded into any shape by the potter’s fingers. The Lord make us such— for these are the people whom He will beautify with His salvation!

I have spoken of meekness towards God, but those who are truly meek are also gentle towards their fellow men. I wish that all Christians had this character and that they might not be rough, overbearing, proud, and intimidating as some are. There are some who seem to think that nobody would esteem them if they did not kick everybody as they went along. They seem to fancy that all other people as well as themselves are made of iron and that their power will not be known unless they dash themselves against all who come near them! But it should not be so among the children of God. Oh, that we might learn that holy courtesy which is one of the true marks of a Christian! Oh, that we might have a tender regard for other people’s feelings because we have a fellow-feeling with them and that we might pass through the world, not anxious to be noticed, but rather to be unnoticed! Not desirous to be great, but willing to be little, eager rather to wash the saints’ feet than to have them crown our heads, desirous not so much to be ministered to as to minister, for true greatness lies in the sacrifice of self for the good of others! Remember how our Lord said to His disciples, “Whoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant”? This is always the rule in the Church of Christ—God makes it to be so, though it seems not according to the usual bent of human nature. The Lord takes great delight in those who are of such a meek, quiet, humble and lowly disposition.

These meek people bear, and forbear, and forgive, even though they have just cause for resentment. For a man to be good-tempered when he is never provoked is no great credit to him. It has been said that the devil himself is good-tempered when he is pleased—and I daresay he is. But for a man who is much provoked, for one who is foully slandered, for one who wishes to do good, but who is misrepresented in all that he does— for such a man to still feel, “It really does not matter. I shall not take any notice of it. I wish I had not even observed it. It is for me to be just as kind as ever I was to those who are most ungrateful—in fact, to heap coals of fire upon the head of him who does me injury, and to do the more good to those from whom I receive the most ill”—this is the way to go through the world feeling that you will not take offense at anything that people say or do! It takes two to make a quarrel and if I will not quarrel with you, then you cannot quarrel with me! Blessed are these peacemakers who keep the peace, themselves, by readily forgiving the wrong done to them by others.

They, also, are meek who can continue to love with much perseverance. To love the unlovely—this is the love which the Spirit of God works in our hearts! To love those who are not only unlovely, but actually unloving, and who return evil for our good and cursing for our blessing— this, indeed, is to be a child of God!

Now, my Brothers and Sisters, I have shown you who the meek are towards God, and towards men. Will you judge whether you deserve that title? Such people are also lowly in themselves. “Oh!” says one, “I will try to be meek.” No, my Friend, do not try to be meek, because he who is meek is meek without trying! I do not know anything that is more nauseous than the attempt some people make to be amiable, Their pride pokes out at every corner and though they try to be very gentle, there is no real gentleness in them and, consequently, it cannot come out of them! Dear Friend, will you learn this lesson? You are a poor sinner— therefore, be meek. You may well forgive others, for you have good cause to ask others to forgive you. You may well be patient with those who provoke you, for you have often provoked your God, yet He has been wondrously patient with you. You may well put up with affronts from your fellows, for who are you, after all? If you have a right idea of yourself, you are so little and so inconsiderable, that whoever affronts you, affronts a mere nobody—so it does not matter! Whoever treads on you does but tread upon the dust, for you are dust—so who shall blame him? “You are setting us hard lessons,” says one. I know that I am! And unless the Lord shall teach you, you will never learn them! It takes a long time to put out the fierce fires of pride—and when you think you have really become meek and lowly in heart, it is sadly surprising how, with a little breath, the ashes begin to glow—and soon the old fires are burning up again! Some people say, “You know, it is a natural pride,” as if its being a natural pride made it any better! Oh, that God would tread out the last spark of it, so that we might obey that blessed command of our Lord, “Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you shall find rest unto your souls.”

II. Having described the truly meek people, now let us consider, in the second place, THE FAVOR TO BE ENJOYED BY THEM. God says that “He will beautify the meek with salvation.”

It is a circumstance worthy of your notice that there are mentioned in Scripture three men whose faces shone. I do not recollect more than three. The first was Moses, the man who was very meek, and you remember how it is recorded that his face shone so that he had to put a veil over it. God had beautified that meek man. Another of the meek ones was Stephen, whose dying prayer for his murderers proves how meek and forgiving he was. It is written of him that when he was accused before the council, they “saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.” This was the second meek man. And the third was—but you long ago anticipated me—and wondered that I did not mention Him first! Not only did His face shine, but His whole Person shone and His garments were whiter than any fuller could make them—that was our blessed Lord, who could truly say, “I am meek and lowly in heart.”

See, then, how God puts the beauty of His own brightness upon meek men! Not upon great men. Not upon those who profess to be great. Not upon obstinate and hard-hearted men. I do not think that even Elijah, great as he was, ever had that beauty upon him. And John the Baptist, though the greatest in the former dispensation, had not that beauty upon him. There is a certain sublimity of roughness about the two Elijahs, but the meek have the beauty of the Lord, our God, upon them. That very softness and, what some men think the weakness of their character, is the background upon which God throws His brightness, so that they become beautiful in His sight. “He will beautify the meek with salvation.”

What is this beauty that God puts upon the meek? O dear Friends, there are some of you who would like to be beautiful—“beautiful forever,” I have no doubt. There have been silly women who have been trapped with those words as an advertisement—but my advertisement is a true one! Here is the way to be beautiful forever—“He will beautify the meek with salvation.”

The Lord beautifies the meek, I think, in this way—He puts into them a peace of mind which fiery spirits never have—and which quick spirits do not know. They are not easily ruffled or disturbed. They have, as others have, much to annoy them, but they are so put into Christ that they cannot be put out. They are rendered so deeply calm, so solidly patient by the indwelling of the Spirit of God, that they bear without seeming to bear—and that which would crush another seems to have no weight with them. The deep peace of mind of a truly meek Christian is, I think, a very beautiful thing.

Over and above that, these meek people have a delightful contentment. Whatever happens to them, they accept it as God’s will. “Good day!” said one, and the other said, “Sir, I never had a day that was not good, for God arranges all.” “Oh!” said the first speaker, “but it is good weather today.” “Ah!” was the reply, “but whatever weather comes, to me it is good, for God sends it and I am happy, let it be what it may.” When self rules, you are never pleased. It is too hot for some of you today, is it not? Not many months ago it was too cold. When it rains, though it is raining bread from Heaven for millions of people, you cry out in a fret, “What a pity it is such a wet day!” And when the sun shines, you would like to be delivered from the burning heat, though that heat is ripening the corn for man and the grass for the cattle. He that will not be pleased with God is never pleased with himself. But he that is of a meek and quiet spirit goes through the world feeling that all is right, whatever comes, and he continues to praise and bless the Lord. I have known some Christians of this sort—I wish I could say that I knew more. There was a dear man of God, an elder of this Church, who, when he came to me one Lord’s-Day morning, when I was half-choked with a horrible November fog, said cheerfully, “Dear Pastor, may we have a happy Sabbath today! It is foggy outside—may it be all bright within! I hope the Lord will strengthen you to be full of holy courage because some people may feel dull through the bad weather. At any rate, let us rejoice and be glad in our God.” I have some such Friends around me, now, thank God, but may we have many more!

Sometimes, God puts upon the meek the beauty of great joy, as if the light of Heaven shone right through them. The light that God has kindled in their hearts shines through their faces and you can see that they are among the happiest of men because God has beautified them with salvation!

Then He puts upon these meek people a beauty of holy character. I daresay you know some persons of this sort, as I rejoice to say that I do. I always feel that it is a great honor to be in their company. They are not very famous people, or very clever people—they will never do very much which the world will notice and put in the papers—but when I get near them, I seem to be like a ship that has entered the harbor, or that has come under a huge bluff where it is sheltering from the wind that is blowing out at sea. They are so good and so gracious that it is a blessing to be with them! I was with such an one this week and I looked up to the truly grand old man with the utmost reverence as he spoke of what God had done for his soul in foreign lands, and of how the Lord had helped him to bear hardship and trial for Christ’s sake. I experienced a great delight as I listened to his holy words and felt the unction that rested upon him. Dear Sister or Brother, God can make you just such a saint as that! He can make you to be full of holiness so that everybody who comes near you will see that there is a Divine beauty upon you! That is poor beauty which consists merely in bright eyes and rosy cheeks, or in the fair whiteness of the lily that will fade like the lily or like the rose. But that beauty which God puts upon us by the Grace that shines from within— the beauty of holiness such as there was upon Christ—this we ought to cultivate, praying to God to fulfill in us the promise of the text and to beautify us with His salvation!

As men and women who are what they ought to be in Christ, grow old, their temper mellows and their whole spirit ripens. There are some godly matrons and some venerable men whose words are most weighty and wise—you cannot hear them speak without remembering their very tones, for there is a long and deep experience at the back of their testimony. When I listened to George Muller, some years ago, I do not think there was very much in what he said if I took the words apart from himself. But then it was George Muller who said it, with that holy blessed life of faith at the back of every word—I was like a child, sitting at a tutor’s feet, to learn of him! I pray God to make you, my Brothers and Sisters, men and women of that sort! May He not only save you, but beautify you with salvation! May He not only make you penitent, but make you meek! May He not only take you to Heaven, but bring Heaven down to you and pour it into your soul that you may begin to enjoy the bliss of Heaven even while you are here below!

III. So I come to my last point, which is, THE GOOD RESULTS TO BE EXPECTED—the advantages which come out of being beautified with salvation. If you and I, by God’s Grace and the power of His Spirit, become truly meek and are beautified with His salvation, this will be the result of it all.

First, God will be glorified. God was not glorified by you, Brother, when you made that fiery speech the other night. You were very zealous, I know, but you used some very strange language and God was not glorified by it. Sometimes, in a dispute, a person who does not know anything about the quarrel can tell which of the two is right by seeing which one controls his temper the better. Use hard arguments, Brother, hard arguments but soft words. And if you can get the two together, you will win the victory! If we are not meek, we do not adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things. But if we are meek, then God is glorified.

Further than that, by our meekness Christ is manifested. When a man can bear provocation and does not utter an angry word, then those who are round about say within themselves, “That is the spirit of Christ.” They cannot see Christ, Himself, for He has gone into Glory, but when they see the meek Believer, they say, one to another, “Surely that must be something like what Christ was when He was here below.” God grant that you, dear Friends, may be living photographs of your Divine Lord!

I feel sure, too, that this meekness makes a Christian attractive. Your high and mighty man is not wanted in any company. Here is one who is wonderfully good in his own estimation—he is so holy that he cannot mix with his fellow men! You feel, when he comes into the room, “Here comes the perfect man—let us get out of the way. He is so superlatively good that he will make some of us feel very bad before long, for we do not like holiness set in that kind of frame.” I know some people who seem as if they meant to make religion as objectionable as ever they could—and as if they had attained to a high degree of Christianity when they had made everybody dislike them—but it should not be so! O Brothers and Sisters, we must be meek and be beautified with salvation, for then we shall be able to attract others to Christ! If we want to draw them to Him, we must let them see how sweetly blessed is the Christian life and how a man can be sternly upright and yet, at the same time, be blessedly cheerful! How he can be dead against sin and yet full of holy love to the sinner—how he would not, to save his life, budge an inch from that which is right and true and yet would give his life away if, by blessing another, he might bring glory to the Lord Jesus Christ!

The Lord beautify us thus with salvation and great good will come of it. May the Lord grant to some of you, who are not meek, but the very reverse, that you may come under the touch of His renewing Spirit and be born again! Then will you be capable of becoming truly meek—and then will God beautify you with His salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

EXPOSITIONS BY C. H. SURGEON: *PSALM 149; MATTHEW 5:1-12.*

Psalm 149:1. Praise you the Lord. This is a Hallelujah Psalm. It begins with, “Praise you the Lord,” and finishes in the same way. It is a complete circle of praise. The long streams of the Psalms end in glorious cascades of hallelujahs. One after another these jubilant notes roll out, as in Handel’s magnificent Hallelujah Chorus.

1. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and His praise in the congregation of saints. There was an old song previous to this new one—in the 148th Psalm—the Psalm for sun and moon and stars, for deeps and dragons, for old men and maidens, and so on. But this is a Psalm for saints, so it is “a new song” for the new creation. Therefore, let all the new creatures of God sing it from their hearts!

2. Let Israel rejoice in Him that made him. This is the best and highest form of creation—the making, not only of men, but of men of God, the making of Israels, the making of prevailing princes.

2. Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. Let them rejoice that their Maker reigns, that He rules over them, and that He rules over all things—“Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.”

3. Let them praise His name in the dance: let them sing praises unto Him with the timbrel and harp. That is, let them repeat the joy of Israel at the Red Sea, when Miriam “took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances; and Miriam answered them, Sing you to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously.” So, O you children of God, let the praises of your God and King ring out as with the music of the timbrel and harp!

4. For the LORD takes pleasure in His people. Then, should not they take pleasure in Him? If He looks upon them with Divine delight, should not they look up to Him with adoring gratitude? What is there in us to give Him any pleasure? But if His delights are with the sons of men, surely the sons of men should have their delights in Him—“For the Lord takes pleasure in His people.”

4, 5. He will beautify the meek with salvation. Let the saints be joyful in glory. Let them glory in God and be joyful in Him. Let their spirits seem to rise even beyond Grace up to the anticipation of Glory—“Let the saints be joyful in glory.”

5. Let them sing aloud upon their beds. If they are sick, or if they lie awake at night, or if they have enjoyed sweet rest, let them not fail to praise God for it—“Let them sing aloud upon their beds.”

6. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth and a two-edged sword in their hand. But let it be a spiritual sword, that two-edged sword of God’s Word which will cut through coats of mail. And as they wield it, let them ever rest satisfied that victory shall surely be theirs. One of the poetical versions of this Psalm rightly renders this verse—

*“You saints of the Lord; as round Him you stand, His two-edged sword, His Word, in your hand, To sound His high praises your voices employ! To victory He raises, and crowns you with joy.”*

7. To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people. So they had to do in those old times. But we, happily, have not to do so, now, except it is in a spiritual sense that, with the sword of God’s Word we are to cut down the idols of the heathen and subdue the nations to our King.

8. To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron. Reading the passage in a Gospel sense, we lead men captives in the bonds of love that are stronger than fetters of iron! O soldiers of Christ, army of the living God, this is the battle you have to fight—be this your victory, too!

9. To execute upon them the judgment written: this honor have all His saints. Praise you the LORD. So the Psalm ends upon its keynote— “Hallelujah.” “Praise you the Lord.’ Now let us turn to the 5th chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew and see what we have to rejoice in there.

Matthew 5:1. And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain: and when He was set, His disciples came unto Him. You notice that the Preacher sat down and that His disciples stood around Him. If you find it somewhat warm and trying, tonight, remember that you have the best of it, for you

 sit while the speaker stands! Concerning our Lord, we read, “When He was set, His disciples came unto Him.”—

2. And He opened His mouth, and taught them, saying.—Perhaps someone says, “He could not have taught them without opening His mouth!” I have found that a great many try to teach without opening their mouths, but the earnest preacher speaks with all his might. So did Jesus in the open air on the mountain side—“He opened His mouth and taught them.” Such grand things as He had to say ought to come from open portals, so He mumbled not, but, “opened His mouth, and taught them, saying.”

3. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for their’s is the Kingdom of Heaven. “Blessed.” See how Jesus begins His Sermon on the Mount? He begins with benedictions! He is a cloud that is full of rain and that empties itself upon the earth. The moment you begin to know Christ, you begin to have blessings! And the more you know of Him, the more blessed you will be. “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” Not those who boast themselves of spiritual riches and personal goodness, but the lowly, the meek, the trembling, the humble, the poor in spirit, “for their’s is the Kingdom of Heaven.”

4. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Let them now be comforted in the prospect of future comfort. There are no mourning hearts that mourn over sin and mourn after God that shall be deserted by their God—“they shall be comforted.”

5. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. They do in the truest sense enjoy even this life—their contented spirit makes them monarchs. The great man, with all his wealth, is often uneasy with a craving ambition for more, but the quiet spirits of God’s people find a kingdom everywhere. The mountains and the valleys belong to him who can, with happy eyes, look upon them and then lift his face to Heaven and feel, “My Father made them all.”

6. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness. They want to be better. They are hungry and thirsty after more holiness. They boast not of personal perfection, they are hungering and thirsting after righteousness, but they have not attained to it yet.

6. For they shall be filled. God will fill them and when He fills men with His fullness, they are full, indeed!  
7. Blessed are the merciful. The forgiving, the generous, the kind. “Blessed are the merciful.”  
7, 8. For they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. There is such a connection between purity of heart and purity of understanding that the man whose eyes are clarified by holiness shall see God!  
9. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. They shall not only be the children of God, but people shall call them by that name. There is something so God-like in trying to put away discord, to remove anger and to promote love that it makes men feel that peacemakers must be the children of God.  
10, 11. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for their’s is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. It is not when men truthfully speak evil concerning you, but when they say it falsely. Not when they say evil against you because of your ill temper which provokes them, but when they do it falsely, for Christ’s sake, then, “blessed are you.”  
12. Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in Heaven: for so persecuted they the Prophets which were before you. And you are treading in their steps, so you are entering into their heritage. You have your beginning with them and, ‘you shall have your end with them. If persecuted with them, you shall also reign with them.

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HALLELUJAH! HALLELUJAH!  
NO. 2421

**INTENDED FOR READING ON LORD’S DAY, JULY 14, 1895. DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON,**  
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON, ON LORD’S-DAY EVENING, JUNE 19, 1887.

**“For the LORD takes pleasure in His people: He will beautify the meek with salvation. Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouths and a two-edged sword in their hands.”  
Psalm 149:4-6.**

I THINK I have read that, once, when the seraphic Samuel Rutherford was preaching, he came, before long, to speak on the high praises of the Lord Jesus Christ. That was a theme upon which he was at home, and when he reached that point, and had spoken a little upon it, the Duke of Argyle, who was in the congregation, cried out, “Now you are on the right strain, man; hold on to that!” I thought that, this morning, we, also, struck the right key. [See sermon #1968, Volume 38—Jubilee Joy—Or, Believers Joyful in Their King—Read/download entire sermon at http://www.spurgeongems.org .] We were trying to extol our God, our King, and to magnify His holy name and something seemed to say to me, “Hold on to that strain! Let us have the same note, again, tonight, and let us continue to laud and praise and magnify the name of the Most High.”

So, without further preface, I remark, first, that our text contains some reasons for praise. We had a great many this morning, but here are some more—“For the Lord takes pleasure in His people: He will beautify the meek with salvation.” Then our text gives special phases of praise. It shows us how, in a peculiar manner, we may praise the Lord—“Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouths and a two-edged sword in their hands.” There is plenty of sea room for a preacher here, but as we have not much time, we will make for the nearest port and our words shall be as few as possible.

I. First, here are SOME REASONS FOR PRAISE.  
The first of these reasons is the delight of God in His people—“The Lord takes pleasure in His people.” Therefore let us praise Him! It is delightful that God takes pleasure in us who are His people. We feel that this is a great stoop of condescending Grace. What is there in us in which the Lord can take pleasure? Nothing, unless He has put it there! If He sees any beauty in us, it must be the reflection of His own face. Yet, the text says so and, therefore, it must be true—“The Lord takes pleasure in His people.” In the 147th Psalm we read, “The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear Him.” You who tremble at His Word, you who stand in awe of Him, you who trust Him and seek to obey Him—you are those that fear Him and He takes pleasure in you! He that is infinitely blessed—can He take pleasure in us? He that has the harps of angels to make music for Him, He that has the host of cherubim and seraphim to be His attendants, He that can make a world with a wish—does He deign to take pleasure in us?  
I am sure this is true, not only because it is stated, here, that the Lord takes pleasure in His people, but because we see this Truth of God in action! The Lord takes pleasure in His people’s prayers. What poor imperfect things they are! Yet He opens His ear to hear them. He would sooner miss the song of a cherub than miss the prayer of a broken heart. He is charmed with the prayers of His people—they hold Him, they prevail with Him—He will do anything for those who know how to pray. “Prayer moves the arm that moves the world.” He must take great delight in His people, or else He would not listen to their prayers! And He is pleased with their praises, too. There is never a hymn that is sung by a true heart but God accepts it. No one may hear it on earth—it may not be worth the hearing, for the sound may be discordant. But when a true heart seeks to praise God, He cares not for the vocal sounds—He has regard to the voice of the spirit’s thanksgiving. Must He not take great pleasure in us to notice our praises and our prayers? Yet He does so.  
This will be still clearer to us, dear Friends, if we remember that while He delights to hear us praise and pray, He also speaks to us. The Lord has a wonderful way of revealing Himself to His people. You who are spiritually blind can go through this world and never see Him, but there are others who have had their eyes opened and they have seen the King in His beauty! You who are spiritually deaf can go through the world and never hear His voice, but they whose ears have been unstopped have heard Him say to them, “Seek you My face,” and many a blessed word of promise has He spoken home to their hearts, making them glad. Jehovah does not shut Himself up within His palaces. The Lord Jesus comes forth out of the ivory palaces wherein they make Him glad, for His delights are with the sons of men—and He loves to commune with His own people as He does not with the world! Does not this show what pleasure He must take in us—first to hear us speak, and then to speak to us, Himself?

Beloved, you who know the Lord must feel that He never would have dealt with you as He has done if He had not taken great pleasure in you. Why, you are His children! I saw just now, from the window, a man playing with a child, and he seemed so happy as he tossed the little one about. It was but a baby, but I suppose the charm to him was that it was his own, and it seemed to give the father great delight. When I see a father playing and toying, thus, with his child, and finding joy in his offspring, I understand, a little, how it is that the Lord takes pleasure in His people. Are we not born of Him? Has He not carried and nursed us many a day? And does He not daily feed and supply us with all necessary things? Therefore, we marvel not that He takes pleasure in us.  
But why is this? Surely it is His own Grace that makes Him take pleasure in us. If you want a person to love you, be kind to him. Yet you may fail even then. To be certain of his love, let him be kind to you. A child may forget the mother—it receives much from her—but gratitude does not always come to her in return. But the mother never forgets the child to whom she has given so much! What she has given is a firmer bond between her and the child than ever gratitude is from the child to the mother. Now, God has done so much for us, already, that this is why He continues to love us. Jesus remembers that He died for us, the Holy Spirit remembers that He strove with us, the great Father remembers how He has preserved us—and because of all this goodness in the past He takes pleasure in us—  
*“With joy the Father does approve  
The fruit of His eternal love;  
The Son with joy looks down, and sees  
The purchase of His agonies.”*  
Moreover, I think that the Lord takes pleasure in us not only because of all that He has done, but because He sees something in us that pleases Him, something which is His own work. A sculptor, when he commences on the marble, has only a rough block, but, after days and weeks of hard working, he begins to see something like the image he is aiming at producing. So I believe that God is pleased when He sees in any of us some Grace—some repentance, some faith, some beginnings of that sanctification—which will, one day, be perfect. You know how pleased you are with your children when they begin to talk, yet it is poor talk, is it not? It is baby talk, but you like to hear the sound of it! The first little sentiment that drops from the child’s lips is nothing very remarkable, yet you tell others and brothers and sisters quote it as an instance of opening intelligence! So does God take pleasure in the tears of penitence, in the broken confession, in the first evidences of faith, in the trembling of hope because He has worked all this and He is pleased with what He has done, pleased to see that, so far, His handiwork has been successful!  
Besides, I believe that every true sculptor can see in the block of marble, the statue that he means to make. I doubt not that the artist could see the Laocoon of the Vatican after he had chipped for a little time, the figure of the serpent, and the father, and the sons all standing out in that wondrous group long before anybody else could see it. And the Lord takes pleasure in His people because He can see us as we shall be. “It does not yet appear what we shall be,” but it does appear to Him! In the cast of His mind and the shaping of His eternal purpose He knows, dear Sister, though you are now struggling with your fears, what you will be when you shall stand before the blazing lamps of the eternal Throne of God! He knows, young man, though you have but a few days turned from sin and begun to struggle with vice, what you will be, when, with all the blood-washed host, you shall cast your crown before His Throne! Yes, the Lord takes delight in His people as knowing what they are yet to be.  
As I talk to you about God’s delight in His people, I feel as if I must take delight in Him. I think that if the Queen were to send for you all to come and see her, and if you went in and out of the palace, and she was very pleased with you all, and showed great affection for you, you would be sure to have the same esteem for her. It would so completely win your hearts that you would not be able to help it—and you would not wish to do so. Now, the great King has made us His creatures, His favorites, yes, His sons and daughters! And He has said that we shall shortly be with Him enthroned above the skies and, therefore, we must praise Him. God forbid that we should be silent when we receive such love from Him! Praise Him! Praise Him, “for the Lord takes pleasure in His people.”  
The next reason for praising God is found in the beauty He puts upon His people. The second part of this verse says, “He will beautify the meek with salvation.” Great kings and princes have often tried to magnify themselves by beautifying their courtiers. They that stand nearest to thrones are expected to be bedizened after an extraordinary rate. Well now, our King takes the meek and lowly and He beautifies them with salvation! They have no beauty of their own—they do not think themselves beautiful, they often mourn their own deformities and imperfections—but the Lord is to be praised because—“He will beautify the meek with salvation.”  
I find that, according to different interpreters, this text may be read in three different ways. First, as in our version, “He will beautify the meek with salvation.” Next, “He will beautify the afflicted with deliverance.” Hear that, you afflicted ones! Jot it down for your comfort. And, next, “He will beautify the meek with victory.” The men that cannot fight shall be beautified with victory! The men that will not fight, the men that resist not evil, the men that yield and suffer in patience—the Lord will beautify them with victory! When the fighting men and those that stood up for their own rights will find themselves covered with shame, “He will beautify the meek with victory.”  
How does God beautify those who are meek? In the Scriptures you will find that the most beautiful persons were the meek persons. I remember only three people whose faces are said to have shone—you remember those three, do you not? There was, first, the Lord Jesus Christ, whose face shone when He came down from the Mount of Transfiguration so that the people came running together to Him. How meek and lowly of heart was He! Another person whose face shone was Moses, when he came down from the mount of communion with God. Of him we read, “Now the man Moses was very meek.” The third man whose face shone was Stephen, when he stood before the council and, in the meekest manner pleaded for his Lord and Master. If your face is to shine, dear Friend, you must get rid of a high and haughty spirit—you must be meek—for the brightness of the Divine Light will never rest on the forehead that flashes with anger. Be gentle, quiet, yielding, like your Lord, and He will then beautify you.  
Meekness is, itself, a beauty. We read of “the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.” There is many a Christian woman who has been all but divinely beautiful in her gentleness, bearing all sorts of provocation’s, going about her domestic duties with great quietude. I am sure that I have known one or two good old Quaker ladies who looked to me as nearly like angels as ever mortals could be. There was about them a quietude of manner, a gentleness, a sort of unworldliness or unearthliness of beauty, though they wore no jewels and were decorated with no adornments that might have commended them to the taste of fashionable folk. The Lord gives great beauty to His people who are very quiet and submissive. If you can bear and forbear—if you will not be provoked to speak a hasty word—that meekness of yours is, itself, a beauty!  
Beside that, God beautifies meek people with peace. They have not to go and beg pardon and make up quarrels, as others have, for they have had no quarrel. They have not to think at night, “I really said what I ought not to have said,” for they have not done so. There is a great beauty about the peace that comes of meekness!  
Another beauty which God puts on the meek is contentment. They that are of a quiet and gentle spirit through the Grace of God are satisfied with their lot. They thank God for little—they are of the mind of the godly woman who ate the crust of bread and drank a little water, and said—“What? All this, and Jesus Christ, too?” There is a great charm about contentment, while envy and greed are ugly things in the eyes of those who have anything like spiritual perception. So meekness, through bringing contentment, beautifies us.  
Out of meekness also comes holiness—and who has not heard of “the beauty of holiness”? When one is made to subdue his temper and curb his will, and yield his mind sweetly up to Christ, then obedience to God’s will follows and the whole life becomes lovely! Let us praise the Lord that ever He put any beauty upon any of us. And let us bless God for the holiness of His people whenever we see it. It is a pity that there should be so little of it, but what a comfort it is that the Lord has some among His people who are of a meek and gentle spirit, whom He beautifies with salvation!  
Here I cannot help breaking away from my subject to tell you what happened to me this morning after the service was over. When I went into the vestry, there was a number of American friends and others waiting to shake hands with me. I was glad to shake hands with them. But there was one person present who did me more good than all the other Brothers and Sisters put together. He was a father and he said to me, “If my emotions will permit me, I would like to tell you something that is on my heart. I feel that I must tell it to you.” This friend came from a distant city. He continued, “My son left my house well clothed and well stored with money, but for a long, long while I never heard from him. He plunged into all kinds of sin till he reduced himself, by disease, to beggary and want. He had not even shoes for his feet.”

As he passed by the front of the Tabernacle—(you young people, here, listen to this story and take home the lesson of it)—all in rags, on a Sunday afternoon, a young man asked him to come into one of the classes here and gave him a tract. He uttered an oath, threw the tract on the pavement, and trampled on it. After a few seconds, some sort of compunction seized him and he turned back and picked up the tract, whereupon this young Brother, quick and alert—(as I hope you young men and women always will be in looking after poor sinners)—spoke to him and said, “Oh, you have picked it up. Now will you read it?” “Yes,” he answered, “I will read it.”  
The young man then said, “Come into our class,” but the poor fellow replied, “Look at me.” “Yes,” he said, “but we will not look at you if you will come in. They will all be glad to see you. Perhaps it may be a turn in your life.” The young man did go into the class and he came in the evening to hear the sermon. They put him somewhere where people would not stare at him, and God blessed Him! He sought out some friends in London who, at first, could not believe that he was the son of this person. They had seen him, before, in better days, so they questioned him and they found that he knew so much about the father that they said, “Yes, no doubt you are his son.” His feet were bleeding and he, himself, was sick, so they cared for him, clothed him and he came in and out of this House of Prayer, his father told me, for many months serving God. His father saw him and rejoiced over him!  
Now this story was told, with many tears, in the vestry behind me— told as I cannot tell it—and the good man invoked every blessing on me and upon that young Brother, whoever he may be, that brought his son in. “And then, Sir,” said the father, “He could not find any work to do so he enlisted in the army, and was killed at Tel-el-Kebir.” He left in his knapsack a letter to his father to say that he died in perfect peace, and that he had found the Savior at the Tabernacle. Our friend was so glad and I could not help telling this story because that Brother outside, I hope, was one of the meek ones, and God has beautified him by bringing that soul to Christ! And we who try to preach very plainly and never aim at adorning our discourses with the flowers of eloquence, but try to talk to people from our hearts—may God give us great beauty in the eyes of many when we bring their children or themselves to the Savior’s feet! I only wish that somebody, like that young man, might be converted, by the Grace of God, through this sermon.  
I think that I have said enough upon those reasons for praise. Let us praise God with all our hearts and bless and magnify His name because He takes pleasure in His people, and because He beautifies the meek with salvation and, sometimes, does it by making them the means of salvation to others!  
II. The second portion of my sermon, which is to be concerning SPECIAL PHASES OF PRAISE, shall be delivered with great brevity.  
The first way of praising the Lord is by glorying in God—“Let the saints be joyful in glory.” “That means the saints in Heaven, does it not?” asks somebody. No, no, no! The Psalmist is not writing for them, he is writing for us! “Well, but we are not in Glory,” says one. I do not know. I think that we are. First, we are in Glory by contrast. Look, dear Friends, a little while ago we were in sin and we were condemned under sin, but now we are delivered, we are absolved from guilt! Surely that is like being in Glory! A little while ago we were cast down and troubled—and had not a ray of hope. Now we have rest in Christ and perfect peace. Is not that like being in Glory? Why, years back, when I had been preaching in Wales, I heard a Welshman cry out, “Gogoniant!” and others have shouted, “Glory,” and I thought it was all right. There is enough to make the saints cry, “Glory!” to think that they have been redeemed from death and Hell, and that their feet have been taken out of the horrible pit, out of the miry clay, set upon a rock and their goings established! Why, truly, it is like being in Heaven, or Glory! Therefore, “let the saints be joyful in glory.”  
Next, as we are in Glory by contrast, so we are in Glory by anticipation. What will Glory be? It will be a peace with God, but we already have that. Glory will be rest and we also have that. “We which have believed do enter into rest.” Glory will be communion with God and we have that, too. “Truly, our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.” Glory will be victory and we have that. “This is the victory that overcomes the world, even your faith.” “But,” asks one, “you do not mean to say that we have Heaven already?” Yes, I do. “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance.” Are not those the Words of Scripture? Here is another Word of Scripture—“God has raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus.” By anticipation and by foretaste we have already obtained life eternal—therefore, “let the saints be joyful in glory.” Rightly do we sing—  
*“The men of Grace have found  
Glory begun below.  
Celestial fruits on earthly ground  
From faith and hope may grow.  
The hill of Sion yields  
A thousand sacred sweets  
Before we reach the heavenly fields,  
Or walk the golden streets!  
Then let our songs abound,  
And every tear be dry—  
We’re marching thro’  
Immanuel’s ground  
To fairer worlds on high!”*  
“I cannot get up to that,” says one. Try, dear Brother, try! At any rate, get as far as this—wherever there is Grace there will be Glory. Grace is the egg and glory is the hatching of it. Grace is the seed and glory is the plant that comes out of it. Having the egg and the seed, we have practically and virtually the Glory! Therefore, I say, again, with the Psalmist, “Let the saints be joyful in glory.”  
The next special kind of praise is joy in special circumstances—“Let them sing aloud upon their beds.” This is a message for the time of sickness. Praise the Lord when you are ill! Sing to His Glory when you cannot sleep! Sing when the head aches, for that is the highest kind of praise that comes out of the body that is racked with pain! “Let them sing aloud upon their beds.” There are, sometimes, infirmities of the body that seem to quicken the soul. There are aches and pains that make us more fresh and vigorous of heart. But there are others that paralyze the mind and, reaching the very core of one’s being, seem to freeze up every spring of activity. It is little wonder that under such infirmities the brave heart grows faint! And it is especially so when there is mental affliction added to the physical pain. I have known men of God, highly favored, and Sisters in like condition, who have walked in the Light as God is in the light, and have had great blessing from Him and, by-and-by, they have had strong inward temptation, an awful fight within, till sometimes they have had to cry out in their very souls to know whether they were with God, or God was with them at all! Doubts have insinuated themselves into the mind and there have been grave and solemn questions about matters most vital and important. And, at such times the man of God, though he still believes in his God and is obedient to the Divine will, yet feels a chill creeping over his very soul and he is ready to faint! Then is the time for him to sing aloud upon his bed, for praise to God under such circumstances will be especially acceptable!  
Your bed? Why, that is the place of seclusion! There you are alone. Have you ever felt so happy that you did not want to sleep? I have sometimes had such joy in the night that I have tried to keep myself from falling asleep lest I should miss the hallowed fellowship which my heart has had with God! Commune with God upon your beds and sing His praises, if not aloud with the voice, yet aloud with the heart!  
Upon your bed? Why, that is the place of domestic gathering, for the bed here meant is a couch on which the Orientals reclined when they ate. Sing the Lord’s praises on your couches—that is, when you gather with your families. “Praise you the Lord: sing aloud upon your couches.” I wish we had more family singing—we ought to have more. Matthew Henry says, with regard to family prayer, “They that pray every night and morning do well. They that pray and read the Scriptures do better. They that pray and read the scriptures and sing, do best of all.” And so say I— that is the best of all family worship! Let us take care, in our domestic relationships, that we praise this blessed God who is the God of our households as well as the God of our sanctuaries!  
Upon their beds? Why, that means the bed of death! We shall soon go upstairs and gather up our feet in the bed. Oh, then, you dear children of God, praise Him aloud upon your beds! I believe that the sweetest praises ever heard on earth have cone from lips that were just closing in the silence of the tomb—  
*“I will love You in life, I will love You in death, And praise You as long as You lend me breathe. And say when the death-dew lies cold on my brow, If ever I loved You, my Jesus, ‘tis now.”*  
Always praise Him! Always praise Him! When nobody hears you, in the silence of your bedchamber, still sing aloud unto your God!  
We must press on, though we have not time for much that ought to be said. The next special phase of praise is elevation in song. The sixth verse says, “Let the high praises of God be in their mouth.” As I told you when I read the Psalm, [Exposition at the end of the sermon—ED.] it is “in their throat” in the Hebrew, for God’s people sing from their hearts and so they are a deep-throated people who do not merely sibilate praise with the lips, but send it up from the depths of their soul!  
What does the Psalmist say? “Let the high praises of God be in their throats.” Our praises ought to be very high praises, for there is a high objective before us. We praise a great God! We should, therefore, praise Him with high feelings, feelings wound up to the highest point of high delight and high desire! Our praises should climb up to Heaven’s gate— running up Jacob’s ladder even as the angels did—till we cast our praises right at the foot of the eternal Throne of God. Let us sound forth the high praises of God with our mouths! Let us extol Him, magnify Him and make Him great! Say noble things of God wherever you go, for He well deserves it at your hands.

The last phase of praise concerns courage in conflict—“and a two-edged sword in their hands.” Songs in their mouths and swords in their hands! It is something like the sword and the trowel—the trowel to build with and the sword to smite with. God’s people must sing and fight at the same time—and they fight best who sing best. Not those that growl best, but those that sing best, fight best  
But with whom are we to fight? That depends upon what your sword is. If you had a sword of steel, you would fight with men—but that is no part of your business. You are not called to that cruel work, but, as you have the sword of the Spirit, which is two-edged, which is, indeed, all edge, for it cuts whichever way you turn it, go forth and praise God by the use of that two-edged sword which is the Word of God!  
Let me stir up God’s people here to do this. Go and proclaim the Gospel! Proclaim the Gospel. I think I have, to a large extent, attained my wish in this congregation. I miss such a large number of our friends on Sunday nights and I am delighted to miss them, for they have no business to be here, then! They are out preaching, teaching, working in Ragged-Schools, mission halls and all sorts of holy service. That is what you ought to do if you love the Lord—get a good meal, once, on the Sabbath, and then go and do a good day’s work the rest of the Sunday! Praise God with your mouths and have the two-edged sword in your hands! To war against ignorance, to war against vice, to war against drunkenness, to war against infidelity and sin of every kind is one of the best ways of praising the Most High! Until the last sinner is saved, see to it that you keep the two-edged sword of God’s Word in your hands and then forever let the high praises of God be in your mouth!  
I have been talking all this while about praising God and there are some here who never praised Him in all their lives! What wretched creatures you are! God has been blessing you all this while and you have never praised Him. I have seen hogs under an oak munching acorns— how they enjoy themselves! They never stop to thank the oak—such a thought never enters into their swinish heads. Do not blame the swine, but think of the numbers of men who are worse than they are! God is to them far more than the oak is to the animals. All things come of Him— their health, their strength, their daily comforts—and yet they never thank Him! Have you some little chickens at home? Let them chide you! Whenever the chick stoops down to the saucer to drink a little water, up goes its head as if to thank God for every drop! Oh, begin to praise God! Begin to thank God at once!  
Perhaps this may be the beginning of something better, for when you have begun to praise Him, you may begin to dispraise yourself—and that is next door to feeling your sinfulness, which will lead you to seek the Savior! And if you seek Him, He will be found of you. Seek Him now, this summer’s night, while all God’s bounty is being poured upon the earth to make it fertile! Oh, that He might pour some heavenly beams on you to make you fruitful to His praise! May He do it and to His name shall be glory, world without end! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: **PSALMS 149; 150.**

The whole Book of Psalms is full of praise, but the praise culminates at the close. There are five “Hallelujah Psalms” at the end of the Book. They are so named because they both begin and conclude with the word, Hallelujah, “Praise you the Lord.” It must be to the intense regret of all reverent persons to find the word, Hallelujah, so used today in such a way that it is made to be a commonplace instead of a very sacred word— Hallelujah, or, Praise be unto Jah, Jehovah! He who uses this word in a flippant manner is guilty of taking the name of the Lord in vain!

Psalm 149:1. Praise you the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song. You have had new mercies from the Lord—give Him, in return, a new song! You have a new apprehension of His mercy. You who live under this Gospel dispensation have something more to sing of than even David experienced! Therefore, “sing unto Jehovah a new song”—throw your hearts into it! Do not let it be a matter of routine, but let your whole soul, in all its vigor and freshness, address itself to the praise of God!

1. And His praise in the congregation of saints. All saints praise God— they are not saints if they do not. The praise of any one saint is sweet to Him, but in the congregation of saints there is a linked sweetness, a wonderful commixture of precious things. Sing His praise, then, in the congregation of His holy ones.

2. Let Israel rejoice in Him that made him. Adore your Creator for your being and for your well-being. He has twice made you, you people of God! Give Him, therefore, double praise—not only the song of those who sang when creation’s work was done, but the praise of those who sing because they are made new creatures in Christ Jesus!

2, 3. Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. Let them praise His name in the dance. The holy dance of those days differed altogether from the frivolous and lascivious dances of the present time. It was a sacred exercise in which the whole body expressed its delight before God.

3. Let them sing praises unto Him with the timbrel and harp. The one to be struck and the other to be gently touched to yield its stringed sweetness.

4. For the LORD takes pleasure in His people. Should not they take pleasure in the condescension on His part to take any pleasure in them? Oh, what a lift up it is for us when we learn to take pleasure in the Lord!

4. He will beautify the meek with salvation. He dresses all His children, but the meek are His Josephs, and upon them He puts the coat of many colors. And they shall inherit the earth.

5. Let the saints be joyful in glory. God is their glory! Let them be joyful in Him.  
5. Let them sing aloud upon their beds. If they cannot come up to the congregation, yet, when they rest at home, or when they suffer at home, let them not cease from their music. God’s praise comes up sweetly, I do not doubt, this Sabbath evening, from many a lonely chamber where the saints are waiting for the appearing of their Lord.  
6. Let the high praises of God be in their mouths. “In their throats,” says the Hebrew, for God’s saints sing deep down in their throats. There is a deeply rooted music when we praise God, which is altogether unlike the mere syllables of the lips that come from a hypocrite’s tongue.  
6. And a two-edged sword in their hands. For we have to fight, today, with principalities, and powers, and wickednesses everywhere! With the sword of the Spirit in our hands, we fight the battles of the Prince of Peace!  
7, 8. To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron. So was it when Israel came into Canaan, ordained to execute the vengeance of God upon the heathen nations. We have no such warrant and no such painful duty—but there is a prince who shall be bound with chains and with fetters of iron one day. The Lord shall bruise Satan under our feet shortly and, meanwhile, we fight against the powers of evil of every kind. Oh, that God would help us to bind King Drunkenness with chains and King Infidelity with fetters of iron! Would God the day were come when impurity, which defiles so many, were overcome and vanquished by the two-edged sword of the Spirit of God!  
9. To execute upon them the judgment written: this honor have all His saints. Or it may be read, “He is the honor of all His saints.” “Unto you that believe He is precious,” or, “He is an honor,” says the Apostle, and there is no honor like that which comes of being coupled with God, living in Him, and living for Him!  
9. Praise you the LORD. What bursts of praise must have risen from the hosts of Israel when they gathered for their annual festivals and sang together these last great Hallelujah Psalms!  
Psalm 150:1. Praise you the LORD. Praise God in His sanctuary. Notice how, in this last Psalm, it is praise, praise, praise, all the way through! I think we have the word, “praise,” some 13 times in the six verses. It is all. “praise Him, praise Him, praise Him.” It is not enough to do it once, or twice, we should keep on praising the Lord till we should make the very heavens ring with the music of His praises! “Praise you the Lord. Praise God in His sanctuary.” That is, in His Holy Place where He dwells. Begin, you angels, cherubim and seraphim—pour forth His praise!  
1. Praise Him in the firmament of His power. Let every star shine forth His praises, and sun and moon cease not to extol Him—“Praise Him in the firmament of His power.”

2. Praise Him for His mighty acts: praise Him according to His excellent greatness. There is a task for us—we shall never attain to that height. We sometimes sing—

*“Wide as His vast dominion lies,  
Make the Creator’s name be known!  
Loud as His thunder shout His praise,  
And sound it lofty as His Throne.”*

But who can compass such a feat as that?  
3, 4. Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet: praise Him with the psaltery and harp. Praise Him with the timbrel and dance: praise Him with stringed instruments and organs. So that there were all kinds of music in those days praising God—the wind and the stringed instruments, the timbrel and the pipe. Everything that can praise God should praise Him. The spiritual significance of these verses is this—let men of different orders and different sorts praise the Lord—men, women, children, those who are deeply taught and those who know but little, those who are great and those who are small. Let every heart regard itself as an instrument of praise and use itself wholly for the Lord’s praise. Having gotten so far, the Psalmist remembered that there were discs of brass, which were struck together, and gave forth a sound to be heard at a great distance, so He said—

5. Praise Him upon the loud cymbals. Crash!  
5. Praise Him upon the high sounding cymbals. Then came another crash!

6. Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise you the LORD. A Jewish Rabbi once remarked to me that the name, Jehovah, was not made up of letters, but only of a series of breaths. [The preacher here uttered the three syllables of the sacred name, Je-ho-vah, as though they were not composed of letters, but only a succession of breaths.] That is the nearest approach to the name of God, three breaths— therefore since all breath comes from Him—and His very name can only be pronounced by breath, “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise you the Lord.” Hallelujah!

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